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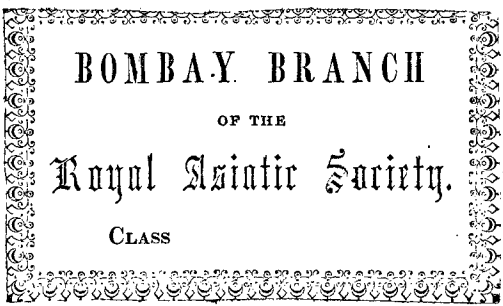

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CHRIST'S KINGDOM UPON EARTH

CHRIST'S KINGDOM UPON EARTH

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES

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BY THE

REV. ROBERT FLINT

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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TO THE

REV. THOMAS T. JACKSON, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

AS A TOKEN OF

GREAT RESPECT AND AFFECTION BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THREE of the Discourses in this volume have been previously published; the first in 1859, by request of Members of Committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science; the eleventh in a religious periodical, having been preached on the Sabbath after the marriage of the Prince of Wales; and the last by request of the Members of the Aberdeen University's Missionary Association. It was originally intended that the volume should contain a few Discourses on the nature, characteristics, and duties of the Church; but further consideration has convinced the Author that these subjects can only be suitably treated in another form.

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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

"THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S."

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."—GEN. i. 1.
"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods."—PSALM xxiv. 1, 2.

THE best of God's gifts are those which are least valued. The light of the sun, water and air, our daily bread and nightly rest, are little esteemed in exact proportion to their exceeding worth. We forget their value—we forget to give God thanks for them, because they are so common. And yet, what is it that is meant by their being so common—what is it that is implied in that? Why, this: that they are so precious, that God, in His kindness, never suffers us to be without them, and puts all His children in possession of them.

They are common, because men could not live without them, or could only live in misery. Thus the very extent of God's liberality makes us ungrateful.

Now, I wish to remark that it is quite the same with truths as it is with things. Whenever a truth becomes very common—whenever, that is to say, it is put by Divine Providence into the minds of all—we begin to neglect it, and to forget that God should be praised for it. When we hear of the wondrous discoveries of science, and those magnificent practical applications of science which form so characteristic a feature in the history of the present age, we stand wrapt in wonder and adoration. "Glory to God in the highest," is the spontaneous utterance of our souls. But meanwhile we forget old truths infinitely more precious than even the grandest discoveries of modern science; truths nigh to us —yea, in our very hearts, if we would only look there—and not truths afar off, and in books that we are not learned enough to read; truths which alone can guide us along the dark and perilous way of life.

It is right to give all honour to those who discover new truths. Honour to those whom God has made honourable: and God has certainly done high

honour to a man when He allows him, first among all the children of men, to look with clear vision on any great law that has been operating from the creation, but of which intellect has not been able hitherto to take any account. God has made a new revelation of Himself to that man, and he may well feel that he is in a sense God's prophet to his fellow-men; but neither he nor we should forget that there have been prophets before him, with still more precious messages to mankind than any which science can now disclose; and that the grandest physical discoveries — those which extend most man's power over the material world—are trifling in their importance, compared with those truths which yield direct and immediate guidance to the spiritual life.

All the scientific schools and associations of Europe converse about what is mere hay and straw and stubble, either for individual man or for society, compared with the subjects which Sabbath after Sabbath are presented to you from the pulpit. The laws which regulate the changes of matter and of mind are alike insignificant to you, compared with those old truths that you have listened to from childhood, and which throw a clear light on the mysteries of your own destinies, and tell

you with precision the duties of each day as it arises.

As a truth pre-eminently useful, and yet exceedingly apt to be forgotten, I wish you to consider with me the statement in the verses I have read—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods."

We all know that truth; we have all known it from our infancy. We cannot tell when we heard it for the first time. Almost the first question put to a child is, Who made you? With the earliest dawn of its reason, we teach it that a wise and holy Being, who loves it, is the Creater of all the grand and beautiful things it sees. All know that God is the Creator, that "the earth and its fulness are His;" and yet, just because all know it, most of us feel very little gratitude indeed to God for revealing it in the Blble.

Perhaps some of you think that you could easily have found it out without any Bible. If you do, you greatly deceive yourselves. Far better and wiser persons than any here have lived and died without finding it out. Men, abler than any man known to

live on the earth in the present day, sought for it, grasped after it amidst the darkness, and were not blessed with its light. There have been great men —giants in the intellectual world—men to whose names and memories all scholars and thinkers bow down, as their highly-venerated teachers of lofty and purest wisdom; and yet, powerful as they were in intellect, and noble as they were in heart, they never, by all their painful and anxious searchings, discovered, what is so well known to the youngest child here, that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Had that truth not come to us immediately from the bosom of our Father in heaven, we would have had long wanderings to reach it; in all probability most of us never would have reached it. The universe would have been a sealed book to us. Blessed then, I say, be the word which has unveiled its mystery; and may we never think it a light or a trivial one.

I wish at this time to tell you the uses of the truth that God is the Creator and the Lord of nature. I believe that most people need to have its uses pointed out to them. But before I do so, I must enter a protest against two great mistakes which men have on the subject of Nature's teachings.

The first is the mistake of those who expect far

too much from Nature. They seem to think that if the spirits of our pent-up, toil-worn, city workmen could only be brought into contact with the clear skies and green fields, most diseases of their souls would be healed for ever. They seem to think that that of itself would purify and ennoble them; that it would bring them to truth and holiness; that, in fact, it would, by a strict necessity, bring them to God. Alas! they who thus speak know not what man is. They forget, in particular, these two things about him—the gross darkness of his mind, and the deep perversity of his heart.

They forget his ignorance; his gross darkness of mind. *That* makes Nature a sealed book to thousands. There is not a syllable in all her pages, the spiritual meaning of which they can make out. They see certain characters written there, but it is in an unknown tongue; and what avails it that a writing is full of instruction and wisdom if the ability to read it be awanting? True, there "are sermons in stones, and books in running streams;" but notwithstanding, to all but one in a thousand, a stone is just a stone, and no sermon—a running stream is simply a running stream, and no book. The greatest of our recent poets says—

"One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach us more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

And *that* is as admirably true as it is admirably beautiful: but then you must be a sage and a good man, or "an impulse from a vernal wood" will teach you absolutely nothing. In fact, here is the truth which is forgotten: We must know God, and love Him, before we can see Him in natural things with any clearness or to any profit. I deny not that Nature may in some small degree lead us to look aright on the Gospel; but I affirm that in a far higher degree the Gospel is needed to make us look aright upon Nature. Awaken, through Christ's death, the love of God within me, and then all Nature will speak to me of God; otherwise she will hardly speak to me one intelligible word. The Gospel must give me the requisite intelligence and the requisite interest.

Now, this intellectual darkness rests not only on the minds of the ignorant and untaught. You will find men who are most eminent in science, as dead to the religious truths conveyed in the voices of Nature as the rudest peasants. And indeed there is nothing very wonderful that it should be so. We see what is precisely similar to it in many cases.

We see men who appear to get by a single glance at the meaning of the most profound and obscure and difficult things in one department of knowledge, quite incompetent to get by any labour beyond the very surface of things in another department. A man may be unequalled for mental power in mathematics, and yet his judgment may be worth nothing in regard to a political or social question. Those who are most successful in the discovery of the laws of the material world, are very rarely competent to investigate the laws of any of the numerous sciences of the mental world.

Now, the difference between a physical and a religious truth is much greater than between even a physical and a mental truth. Thoroughly distinct exercises of mind are required to discover a law and to perceive its spiritual meaning. A soul most able to do the one may be most inapt at doing the other. Thus the man of science, no less than the workman or the merchant, needs to be on his guard against that ignorance, the issue of which is practical atheism—utter blindness to the Divine meaning of creation.

Those whom I refer to as thus overestimating the religious teaching of Nature, equally forget the perversity of the human heart. They forget that,

in the consciousness of its own guilt, the soul of man turns away from everything which reminds it of God's goodness and holiness, with a deep and intense aversion. Glorious scenery will indeed awaken irresistibly, in the breast of every man of culture, certain grand vague emotions which overflood the soul with strange pleasures, and make him feel that he is in the presence of a great, mysterious, invisible Being. These emotions he will doubtless cherish for the delights they give; and far be it from me to speak of them with any want of reverence.

This, however, must be said: They will not in themselves do much for us in the real business of life. We need something less vague—something so definite and clear that we can carry it away with us, and have it for an ever-present help and joy. The man of mere culture, however—the man whose soul is not truly at peace with God—will never seek such definite views. Were Nature to tell him of holiness, justice, and truth, of unrequited love and mercy despised, as well as merely thrill him with a sense of transcendent beauty, he would turn away from it with coldness and sinking of heart. Every word would put him to shame. Again, I say, the Gospel is needed to make us look aright upon

Nature, and it is absurd to think that Nature can supply the place of the Gospel.

But there is a contrary and more prevalent error. It is the undue depreciation of Nature. It is the forgetting that it has got spiritual uses at all; that it has any real place in our religious education. There are, it is to be feared, many very good men who make this error; who think and act often as if the universe were but a stall for provender—a place merely for growing corn and wine in; who never realise that it too is a revelation, and that if Nature be not complete without the Gospel, neither is the Gospel complete without Nature. But, surely, this glorious universe was never made merely to satisfy the lower or animal wants of our souls—to fill us with food when hungry, with drink when thirsty. No; it speaks to everything that is highest and holiest in us. It should be approached with profoundest reverence. It will do little for us before we come to Christ; but there is no overrating what it will do for us after we have come to Christ.

The error I now speak of, however, will be best refuted by simply pointing out what really are the uses of the truth contained in the verses chosen as texts. To that we now proceed.

And in the first place, It makes "the earth and its fulness" very solemn: it invests it with a deep, religious awe.

You are aware what an important fact in the Christian system is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of true believers; what an encouragement and incentive it is to keep your hearts pure and holy, and to present your bodies unto God as a living sacrifice, acceptable and undefiled. It is its final, its crowning truth; a fact which gives it an immeasurable superiority over every previous revelation of God made to the patriarchs and prophets; a perfectly infinite source of virtue and holiness. What that truth does for the Gospel, the fact that "the earth is the Lord's" does for religion in general. God's presence with Nature causes the Christian to regard it with religious feelings, less deep perhaps, but essentially the same in kind, as the Spirit's presence with all saints makes him look upon his own body. The emotion in the former case is not so powerful, but its objects are boundless. In the latter case it is stronger, but the objects are limited. The presence of the Third Person of the Trinity to our hearts ought not, however, to make us forget the presence of the First Person to all things. Nay, we may venture to say, that if the truth that "the

earth is the Lord's" will not make Nature solemn and sacred to us, we will be unmoved by the other truth, that we are a peculiar people in Christ Jesus, through the indwelling of the Spirit.

It is impossible for a rightly-constituted heart to feel the close connection of all things with the invisible and almighty God, and yet not look upon them as bound to be consecrated only to noble uses. The very thought changes at once the universe into a great temple for praise and worship of the Eternal, and all the bounties of Nature into gifts to be laid upon His altar. This is surely no small matter, but the one all-important matter. It is just religion brought really into all that we do. It is just life made a long act of worship—the meanest things among which we move made sacred; so that the very stones of the street, and the trees of the field, witness to us about God.

In the second place, The fact that "the earth is the Lord's" is a source of pure and holy joy, from which we may draw whenever we look upon anything in Nature that is fair and well fitted to fulfil the end of its creation.

When a man looks upon the fields in autumn, laden with yellow grain rich and ripe for the harvest,

he cannot help feeling the beauty and pleasantness of the sight; and when he thinks how many mouths they will fill with food and gladness throughout the land, he must be cold-hearted indeed if he does not feel gratified in his inmost soul by reflecting on the amount of happiness that will thus be diffused among his fellow-men. All this, however, a man might feel without any knowledge of the truth that God is the Creator and Lord of all things; but teach him so, and not only will he feel all that, but, over and above, he will see in these harvest-fields a sign of the wondrous love which the Father in heaven bears to even the humblest of His children on earth. He will learn to trace out, in all the visible forms of creation, the glorious character of their invisible Author and Possessor. All that is lovely in earth and heaven will be *felt* more lovely still, because they speak of a beauty and perfection lying beyond the range of the eye of flesh, but within the range of faith —a beauty and perfection infinite and inexpressible.

Thus the religious man—the man who practically and abidingly realises the truth of my text—sees in Nature more than any other man. The knowledge that God is its Creator and Lord, raises him far above itself. It makes the earth one great symbol of heaven—the visible of the invisible. It brings

the human mind into contact with an infinitely higher and better world. The godless man, the religiously indifferent man, sees no more than half of what the godly man sees; and that half is certainly the lowest and least valuable half. In this respect the godly man alone is a complete, an entire man; the godless man is but half a man.

The importance of this truth cannot be overestimated. It shows that we need not abandon the pursuits of ordinary life to enjoy the delights of a religious life. It shows that all that we need is a vivid, lasting, operative feeling—a steady, practical conviction—of the connection between heaven and earth; a true appreciation of the meaning and bearing of the opening verse in our Bibles. The man of science is not asked, for instance, to turn away from those special investigations which are engrossing his attention, and to engage in a perfectly distinct order of contemplations unrelated to the matters he has in hand. He is simply asked to observe and investigate in his own special department with a fully awakened nature—to let his religious sensibilities have free play about what he is doing; and his special investigations, being thus consecrated, will of themselves train and educate him for the duties and delights of the heavenly life.

But not only does the truth that "the earth and its fulness, the world and all that are therein," are the Lord's, extend the range of our thoughts and enjoyments; it also heightens the value of those that are common to the whole race. It makes us bear a deeper and truer love to all God's creatures. The fact that they are His creatures will do more than merely prevent us from using them with harshness and cruelty. It will give them an interest in our eyes, and make them objects of delightful contemplation. It will make us begin to look upon all Nature with eyes of thoughtfulness and love. It will of necessity constrain us to say,—

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things, both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

Thirdly, By thus sending men to Nature as well as to Scripture for their religion, our texts tend to give breadth and freedom to the religious character. This is what many sincerely good men sadly want. It is often impossible not to recognise their genuine earnestness and spirituality of mind, when we are greatly repelled by their austerities and their narrowness of view. They obviously breathe in the midst of a vitiated atmosphere. There is disease

about their very goodness. Now, when you turn away from the biography of such a man, or from listening to his conversation, and read such a psalm as that which I have read this forenoon—the 104th Psalm—you see into the whole mystery of the disease. There is a great and felt difference. You have come from the company of one who thinks Religion is the denial of Nature into the company of one who thinks it elevates and perfects Nature. You feel that here, where you are now, there beats a heart pious and spiritual indeed, but also of a large and genial humanity, and delighting in all natural beauty and excellence. There is nothing artificial or exclusive, nothing making the life rigid and austere, unsociable or ungenial, in such piety, however deep or fervent it may be: whereas it is impossible to describe how much hardness and austerity and sickliness is given to the religious character by making the Bible alone—the Bible arbitrarily severed from Nature and life—the sole source of spiritual growth. I would then, most emphatically, that men would think on the Gospel not less, but on Nature more. There can be no breadth, no geniality otherwise; no childlike simplicity, no readiness to receive Divine impressions. The influences of Nature are constantly needed to

keep alive those feelings of admiration, hope, and love, which enter so largely into spiritual life.

Again, and fourthly, The great truth under consideration ought effectually to destroy in us all pride. It should do so in more ways than one. The very grandeur of Nature, taken in connection with the fact that God made it, must have *this* tendency. It forces home on us the feeling of our utter insignificancy. You will remember how vividly David has described this feeling as springing up within him on the contemplation of Nature's magnificence. "When I consider," he says, in the 8th Psalm—"when I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" And in the very psalm from which I have chosen one of my texts, immediately after the words, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein: for He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods," he exclaims, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" and, "Who shall stand in His holy place?" which is almost the same thought; the only difference being, that instead of asking, "What is man, that Thou art

mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" he here asks, What is man, or the son of man, that he should be permitted to draw near unto Thee, and worship in Thy great and holy presence?

It humbles us too in this other way. God is the Author of creation, and as the Author of creation He is the Author of all the truth that we can ever know. All truth has its source in Him. We make not a single truth; we merely find it. If systems of truth are *inventions* of the individual, they are good for nothing. Genius in its highest efforts succeeds only in so far as it confines itself to an interpretation of the Divine conceptions—to tracing the lines and features in a plan whose foundation was laid at the dawn of creation. If any one cease to be a mere interpreter, if he aspire to be something higher, if he would usurp the place of a legislator over Nature, he cannot but fail. This humility is inculcated by all true science. It is in fact the most valuable lesson which science has to teach us; and when Scripture, throwing light on science, tells us that this truth, which we have found not to come from man, comes from God, we are brought to feel in a true way the dependence of our souls on the Father of our spirits—the Father of lights,

"from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift."

I would now most gladly proceed to show the political and social consequences contained in the truth that all things are God's; but to do so even rapidly would require a discourse to itself. This would open up to us subjects of intense interest. If any here have paid attention to the speculations of French and German Socialists and Communists, they must be aware what an important part the words, "The earth is the Lord's," have had in their formation. Some of these systems are little more than elaborate misapplications of them; and others are just elaborate exaggerations of the truth they contain. These speculations will serve a valuable purpose in Providence, I doubt not. It will be a great gain if they make us understand and appreciate better this sentence of our Bibles.

On the origin of property I believe it throws little light. The difficulties on that point seem insuperable. The decisions on it have always appeared to me as unsatisfactory and intangible as those on the freedom of the will. But this it certainly shows, that it is impossible for a man to hold anything as his absolute property; that by no price or labour can you purchase an absolute right in a thing. If

you believe or say that, because you have inherited an estate, or even because you have bought it with the wealth which you have earned by the hardest labour of body or of mind, it is *yours* to do with it as you please, or that you are anything more than the steward of it, you contradict most directly the truth that "the earth and its fulness are the Lord's." You say they are *yours*, not *His*. If a State law or a political economist encourage you in your opinion, it is none the less false. God is, strictly speaking, the sole proprietor in the universe. He made "the earth and its fulness," and allows us to enjoy them as stewards—"to occupy until He come." We are not at liberty to use anything for our own purposes. Everything must be employed for the common good of all, for the greatest glory of God.

Lastly, Our texts remind us that we are the Lord's. We have not even an absolute right in ourselves. We are bound to work out by every power and energy of our nature the will of God in our creation. We are bound to sacrifice life itself in His service, if that be needed. Should I see before me some great work which I can perform to my race, but only by over-exerting every physical and mental energy, so that if I do it I must sink into an early

grave; still, if the work be of higher value than anything else I can do for my fellow-men with my life, then am I morally bound to sacrifice that life, however pleasant and dear it may be to me. The summons to all of us is, "Be ye holy, as I am holy." God grant that through the strengthening of His Holy Spirit none of us be unfaithful to it.

SERMON II.

REST IN CHRIST.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—MATTHEW xi. 28.

CHRIST here declares Himself to be God and Saviour by the promise of what Almighty God and a perfect Saviour can alone give. His promise, however, is neither universal nor absolute. It is only made to a specified class of men—the labouring and heavy laden; and to that class only on a specified condition—the coming to Himself. It therefore cannot be understood by us unless we consider it with reference to the persons to whom it is made, and with reference to the condition on which it is made. When so considered it will be found to contain the very marrow, the substance of the Gospel of Christ.

The words of the text are all figurative. They proceed on the analogy which exists between the body and the soul of man. They are strictly de-

scriptive of a physical condition, act, and result; but they are applied to a spiritual condition, act, and result. This sort of language has advantages which are very obvious. It is both more concise and more forcible, it both conveys more, and is more easily and more firmly remembered than terms directly and exclusively applicable to spiritual realities. It would need, for instance, many such terms to give any adequate notion of the state of mind which Christ speaks of as "labouring and being heavy laden," of the act which He speaks of as "a coming unto Himself," and of the result which He denotes by the one word "rest." There is a wonderful suggestiveness, a wonderful wealth of meaning in His language, owing to its being figurative; and for the same reason it takes a readier, firmer, and deeper root in the imagination and memory, as it is a law of our being to be more easily and strongly impressed by what is associated with the senses than by what belongs to the pure and abstract intellect.

But figurative language has defects as well as advantages. It is apt to be thought much clearer, much simpler than it really is. It is rarely, perhaps, referred faithfully to the invisible realities it is meant to convey information about, rarely com-

pared faithfully with these realities. It seems, for example, the simplest of all language to say to any one, "Look to Jesus," and it undoubtedly is very simple, as well as suggestive and impressive, language to one who is sufficiently aware what the Gospel is; but it is not, whatever may be said or thought to the contrary, either a very simple or very appropriate direction to those who are extremely ignorant as to the general character of the Gospel. It is best, in dealing with all such persons, to tell them plainly, unfiguratively, what the revealed conditions of salvation are, what must be believed, and what must be done by them; because, until they are thus far instructed, the seemingly simplest figurative language must either carry with it to them no meaning or a false one, in spite of, and even perhaps because of, its apparent simplicity. Until intellectually acquainted with at least the leading facts and principles of the Gospel, they cannot understand "looking to Christ" to mean what it does mean—the belief of these facts and principles, and the acting of them out in life; but, if they attach a meaning to the expression at all, must suppose it to describe some mystical act of imagination, the sight of some thing or person through the imagination, a kind of ecstatic vision of mind. Thus

they will be led to take a mere delusion for the very essence of the Gospel. Hence the danger of an ignorant and incautious use of the simplest figurative language.

Why then, it may be asked, did our Saviour make such frequent and varied use of this language? The reason must be obvious to all who have formed a correct conception of the historical position of His life and mission. Our Saviour came rather to found the Gospel than to preach it, rather to establish the kingdom of God by deeds than to diffuse it by words. Redemption had to be wrought out ere it could be plainly preached. Christ had to suffer unto death, and the Holy Spirit had to descend, and then men could go forth and without parable or figure describe to their fellow-men what the kingdom of God was, and what was demanded of those who would belong to it. This was what the apostles could do, and the apostles did it. They used plain and direct language.* Our Lord did the same

* The single exception, the Apocalypse of St John, not only proves what the true rule is, but gives us the reason of the rule. St John could not write of the kingdom of Christ in so far as it was a kingdom yet to come, with the same plainness that he could write of it in so far as it had already come. As to the nature of the symbols made use of in this marvellous book, I can find no reason to believe that in even a single instance do they represent particular events and individual persons, but many reasons to believe that they exhibit only those great spiritual principles on which the whole of God's government, as related

when speaking of the moral law, when condemning vice or commending virtue; but when speaking of the kingdom which He had to set up by His death, when speaking of the Gospel strictly so called, He did not, and could not, speak plainly and simply as the apostles could do, but had to express Himself partly through parables, partly through symbolical acts or miracles, and partly through figurative language. This language He varied exceedingly, not only to set forth His Gospel under all aspects, but to guard against the dangers which a sad experience has taught us always results when it is exclusively regarded in the light cast upon it by any one figure or image. Yet even the apparently plainest of His figurative declarations—it is an historical fact certified to us by the evangelists—were not understood except by those who had some special power of spiritual discernment. When He spoke, for example, of being the true bread from heaven, the multitude wondered if He meant that He would give them His flesh to eat. None understood Him

to the mediatorial dispensation of His Son, proceeds. The so-called historical method of interpretation is not only erroneous in sundry of its applications, but erroneous from beginning to end, erroneous as a method. The Apocalypse is in no sense or degree a prophetical almanac, but the earliest philosophy of history, and one immeasurably superior to any other which has ever been written from the same lofty although limited point of view.

except those who had eyes quickened to see and ears to hear. None understood Him when He spoke of those mysteries of His kingdom, which are now the veriest elements of every Christian creed, except the more than ordinarily thoughtful.

It might be useful to trace some of the consequences which follow from the fact now stated, especially as the fact itself and all its consequences are often most injuriously overlooked; but it is necessary that I refrain, and turn to consider the declaration of our Lord which has been chosen as a text. God grant that with grateful and glad hearts we may meditate on, and comply with, the blessed invitation here given us! That we may speak and hear profitably, let us speak and hear prayerfully.

This, then, has first to be noticed, that Christ makes His invitation and promises His reward only to the labouring and heavy laden. He asks nothing from, and promises nothing to those who feel as if they had no burdens to bear, or as if they had strength enough in themselves to support all that had been or could be laid upon them. Now there are two feelings essentially characteristic of those who labour and are heavy laden. There is a feeling of pressure on the soul, and there is a feeling of feebleness within it. Indifference or insensibility in its various forms

is in direct antagonism to the former of these feelings; pride or self-dependence in its various forms is in direct antagonism to the latter.

There is a feeling of pressure on the soul. Life is realised to involve weighty responsibilities. It is realised to involve tasks difficult and harassing. All the gay and trifling, all the careless and thoughtless, all who rejoice with the whole heart in youth or strength, in attractions of body or acquirements of mind, in popular applause or worldly wealth, labour not and bear no load because life lies as yet with no weight upon them,—because they fancy it far lighter and far less serious than it is,—because they have never looked upon it clearly and comprehensively—have never learned the heaviness of its tasks and the hollowness of its promises,—how real its evils are and how false its joys are. They have seen it only when surrounded with the halo of a transient beauty, with a cloudy and delusive glory. Their experience of it has been wanting alike in depth and breadth, both superficial and one-sided; its real nature they have not reached, and its darker aspects, its serious trials, have not come round to them. Hence they have no labour, no heaviness of soul, and hence, also, Christ cannot speak to them, nor can His ministers, in His name, in words of direct invita-

tion, for they have not yet reached the stage of thought and feeling where such words would be intelligible to them. Burdens must be felt before the offer to bear them can be valued and accepted. All that we can do for such persons is to assure them in words of solemn and affectionate warning that this lightness of feeling which they possess, this careless buoyancy of heart and spirit, is a delusion, and that when they have come to take a deeper and more comprehensive view of life, and have had to pass through more, they will find out their mistake. It is a serious question then, my friends, for you all—a testing question for you as professing Christians, Have you in God's good providence been brought even thus far? Have you been brought to a knowledge of the seriousness and responsibility of life? Have you any real sense of its painful pressure upon you? For while you may have reached that point and yet not be a Christian, if you have not reached it you are assuredly no Christian: yea, in that case, you are far, very far, from being one, and your whole view of the world and of your position in it must be changed, and even reversed, before you can understand what Christianity is, and what it aims at—before you can make a meaning out of the injunctions of the Gospel, or lay hold of its promises.

The feeling of pressure on the soul, the sense of a heavy burden to be borne, may come from various causes. It may come from affliction. God may dispel a man's illusive fancies about life by sending loss of health and fortune, by sending pain and sorrow. Many have thus been led, and are daily being led, to alter their views about it. They find by experience that it can press with a weight they never dreamed of in other days, never for a moment supposed possible. They find that, let them nerve themselves up to bear its burdens as they may, it needs the utmost tension of every faculty to do so; ay, and that after all they stagger and grow faint—strength ebbing away, hope dying out, darkness creeping over the eyes, and despair settling down on the heart.

Or it may come from disappointed desires. So it does in many. They set their hearts on some worldly object or other. They immensely over-estimate the worth of that object, and immensely under-estimate the exertions that must be made to obtain it. It seems within easy reach, but baffles and mocks their attempts to grasp it, until at length, when their strength is exhausted, they behold it disappear and escape them for ever; or if they succeed in obtaining it, find that what they took for precious gold is

merest rubbish—that what they have pursued as the highest good is a vanity or a curse—and that if their life is not to be one long error, ending in awful ruin, they must now, when their vigour is gone and their days are near a close, begin the great work of it over again. Thus wearied with their useless efforts, and in bitterness of heart because of disappointed desires, they can understand right well the expostulations of the Prophet, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And labour for that which satisfieth not?"

Guilt, again, is another cause of painful pressure on the soul, and, indeed, the heaviest and sorest of all. Multitudes, it is true, have consciences so dull and dead that they never realise that God has claims upon them which they are not meeting, and that consequently their guilt is fearfully accumulating against them. These, of course, owing to their strange and stupid insensibility, are conscious of no burden. But whenever a man has been aroused even a little out of such fatal lethargy—whenever he has been so quickened in conscience as to ask himself seriously, How does this mass of constantly-increasing guilt affect me in God's sight and as an immortal being? Will God call me to account for it? Is it not all standing against me as a debt for

which I am responsible to the very uttermost farthing? Do not reason and conscience and Scripture declare that what has been sown in the form of sin must be reaped in the form of punishment? I say when a man has once been brought seriously to put to himself these surely most reasonable questions, and has found, as find he must, that the only answer to them is that his whole life has been an incessant and zealous treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath, it is no marvel if he feel crushed down by a dreadful load which he can neither bear nor cast off.

Sin, as a present power within us, is another cause, and the last I shall mention. What its weight and might are no man knows until he begins to hate and fight against it. Then it seems to cling the closer and to weigh the heavier, as if its strength were increased by every effort put forth to weaken it. Sin is as certainly stronger than we are, as it is feebler than God is. A single bad habit, when it has once got firmly rooted in the nature, is more than most men can contend successfully against. It requires, for instance, a fortitude of character, which, alas! is very rare, for a confirmed drunkard to free himself from the degrading thraldom of his ruinous passion. What shall we say, then, when the task is

not to get rid of one bad habit, but of all—not to overcome some single vice, but to obtain the victory over a vile heart? What but that the leopard may more easily change its spots, or the camel pass through the eye of a needle, than any man do this? What but that the strongest who self-reliantly grapples with sin, resolved in his own strength to conquer and crush it, will soon find himself grovelling as a helpless victim beneath the foot of his antagonist? Sin as a present power—this too, then, is indeed a burden and a heavy load.

I have thus described the nature and pointed out the causes of a sense of pressure on the soul. But a state of painful labour supposes a sense of feebleness within, as well as a sense of pressure from without. The heaviest load is no burden where there is strength adequate to its easy support. Hence in every labouring and heavy-laden man the consciousness of outward pressure must be accompanied by a corresponding consciousness of inward feebleness. He is one who not only knows the evils of life as they are, but one who knows himself as he is; one who has obtained self-knowledge in the only way it can be obtained—that is, by laying self-conceit aside. He has searched and tried himself honestly, making an earnest use of reason, con-

science, experience, and revelation, and has found himself, when weighed in these balances, wanting. It has been painful for flesh and blood to come to such a conclusion, but he has been compelled to come to it; he has been brought to feel that there is no other for him—that if left to himself in any instance he will fail, whether what is required of him be endurance or performance. Have you, my friends, sincerely accepted this humbling conclusion? If you have not, neither have you yet closed with Christ's invitation. Before you can do so, your pride, your self-reliance, must be abandoned. Christ will only deal with you as what you are. He will not begin His work in you by falsehood and flattery. He demands that you renounce, at the very outset, your own wisdom and strength, your own will and self-love, as folly and weakness, and resign yourselves wholly to Himself; that you place no trust in your own unaided power, either to accomplish duty or to sustain trial, but recognise that, apart from His help, His grace, you must remain fettered by the bonds and crushed by the weight of misery and sin.

I have now explained who those are that may be described as "labouring and heavy laden," and the explanation should make easily intelligible what Christ means when He says to all such, "Come

unto me." That is one of the most abused of expressions, one to which mystical and delusive ideas are constantly being attached, one which a school of divines, deemed by many the truest exponent of the Gospel, and the freest from the taint of heterodoxy, makes the frequent vehicle of errors dangerous and deadly. It is not difficult, perhaps, to perceive how Christ's invitation would be understood by those who heard Him utter it. Neither His friends nor His foes would put a mystical interpretation on it, any more than they would suppose that He meant a mere bodily approach. His disciples would believe that they had come to Him already, and His enemies would deny that He had a right to demand that they should come to Him; but friends and foes, all who were present, would attach substantially the same meaning to His words, would say within themselves, "He asks us to take Him as a teacher and master, to believe what He says, to do what He commands, to defend and promote His cause." None who heard Him could suppose Him to mean less than this, and perhaps none of them could suppose Him to mean more. His mission was still a profound mystery even to the most thoughtful of His disciples. It does not seem to have as yet dawned on them that He was the Son of God; and although

they were all confident that He had some great and good cause to accomplish, what that cause was, and how it was to be accomplished, not one of them could tell. There were needed by them, before they could do so, the enlightenment of His death, and of His ascension, and of the Holy Spirit, and all the other gifts which followed His ascension. The notion, therefore, which even our Lord's best hearers must have formed of what He meant by "coming unto Him," could not have been other than very defective every way, than vague and superficial; but at the same time the notion formed of it by His worst hearers, by the most thoughtless and even the most hostile of them, must have been true as far as it went; and if they had consented to accept what they understood Him to mean, and honestly sought to act on it, it would have been, in the circumstances, sufficient for them, defective as it was; for they would have been guided by faithfully following the little light apprehended into ever deeper and truer views of what was meant, until brought at length fully to realise both the invitation and the promise. The conception of His meaning, which must have first been formed, is still the only legitimate one, only we must receive it in all its comprehensiveness and richness, as becomes those who live in

these "last days," after the manifestation of God in Christ has been consummated on Calvary and at Pentecost, and when no new fact of the Divine scheme of Redemption remains to be disclosed.

So receiving it, "to come to Christ" means neither more nor less than to become a Christian, and, this mysticism set aside, includes three things which I shall briefly mention. First, it supposes some knowledge of what Christ taught, suffered, and accomplished—some knowledge of the facts, of the truths, which constitute the Gospel. I venture not to try to define how much knowledge there must be. That is a foolish task many have laboured at, distributing all the truths of the Gospel under the two heads of essential and non-essential. I think very little of these labours, and of the distinction which they proceed upon. But while we may doubt or even deny that there is any fixed amount of knowledge, any invariable number of truths, essential to all, without respect of persons or circumstances, there can be no reasonable doubt that some knowledge—it may be very different for different men—is essential to Christian belief. Wherever we are bound to believe, we are bound to have as much knowledge as will make our belief intelligent, reasonable. Belief we know not of what nor

why is not a religious but an immoral state of mind, for which God will call us to account and punish us. There is no coming to Christ possible, then, except through some knowledge of, some acquaintance with, what God's Word tells about Him. It is true that this knowledge, this mere head-knowledge, is no more than a condition implied in coming to Him; it is not the coming itself, but it is nevertheless an essential condition. And, strange as it may sound, true it is, that this preliminary condition is not unfrequently wanting; that even in this land of Bibles, and churches, and schools, many are ignorant of the most elementary facts and principles of Revelation. There is scarcely a clergyman who cannot tell you of cases of most deplorable ignorance on religious matters, which have come under his own personal observation. I, for one, have found grown-up persons, of reputable character, who had been in the habit of attending church all their days, unable to tell where Christ was born and what death He died—unable to tell, indeed, anything about Him. What use can there be in telling these persons to "come to Christ"? You might as well say to them, "Come to Bouddha," or "Come to Mahomet." Any of these expressions might alike be so employed as to produce, under

certain circumstances, in natures thus darkened, a hysterical revolution, but not a spiritual regeneration. Preaching can scarcely be of any service to such persons; it must almost inevitably go over their heads. Preaching starts from the facts of Christ's life, instead of stating them; whereas the simplest statement of facts is here what is needed, and that can be given only by slow and toilsome teaching, not by addresses, not by preaching, however fervent. Let it not be said that this is limiting the power and work of God's Holy Spirit. If it be limiting it, it is at least limiting it as Scripture has taught us to do. It is the uniform doctrine of Scripture that the Holy Spirit has not been given to make a revelation of truths, to impart a knowledge of facts, but to apply them when known. The Holy Spirit has not been given to teach that the Son of God became incarnate, and suffered unto death for us, to those who, through carelessness in themselves or neglect in others, are ignorant of these truths; but to make them living and saving truths to those who do know them. This preliminary knowledge, therefore, of who Christ was, and what He did, and why He did it—this knowledge of what the Gospels say about Him—must be insisted on as the first condition involved in coming unto Him.

The second condition is, The recognition of Christ as made known in Scripture, the recognition of the Gospel of truth and grace revealed by Him, to be of supreme importance. It is necessary that all who come unto Him realise their need of Him; realise that apart from Him they are undone; that neither in themselves nor elsewhere, save only in a crucified Saviour, is there any good, any safety, for them. It is necessary that they feel that, apart from the light which He, by the whole manifestation of God in Him, has shed on the relations of the sinner to God, there is no true *light* in the world; that they may torture their reasons to the utmost, and search through every corner and cranny of nature, but that, apart from the scheme of redemption, they will find nothing but darkness. Nature was made before the existence of sin, and can tell the sinner nothing about what will be done in regard to it; so that if there be not light for us in the only other Divine revelation which has been imparted to our race—that which is through Christ—then on those momentous matters, compared with which the grandest results of science are as the dust of the highways contrasted with whatever is of most value among men, there is no light for us anywhere, and we are doomed to grope through life in the midst of the

deepest darkness. It is necessary, likewise, for men to recognise as to their *guilt*, that if what Christ is said to have suffered and done be not true, there is no good evidence that God will forgive it. There may be no certainty that, on repentance or some other condition, He will not, but neither is there any certainty that He will, nor is there any probability even which rests not on the vaguest, feeblest, most conjectural grounds. It is only from the revelation of God's purposes in Christ that we can rationally conclude in a decided way that there may be forgiveness for the past, and happiness for the eternal future. It is no less necessary for those who would come to Christ to recognise that, apart from Him, *sin* can neither be got rid of, nor holiness established; that the motives which Christ's life and death excite, and the power which the Holy Spirit, one of His gifts, confers, are the only sources whence spiritual life can either be derived or sustained in human nature as it is since the Fall; that, left to themselves or acted upon even by the purest and most powerful influences, these only excluded, there is nothing for them but spiritual death in the present world, and eternal death in the future world. Thus to recognise the supreme importance of Christ as offered to us in the Gospel, that in Him there are

light, forgiveness, life for us, while apart from Him there are darkness, condemnation, and death for us, is the second thing involved in coming unto Him.

It is not enough, however, merely to recognise all this; we must accept and act on it, and this is the third thing that must be done in order to come to Christ. We must acquiesce in heart and life to the revelation He has made of Himself, allowing the facts and truths of it absolutely to prompt and guide us. Since there is no light in matters spiritual but His, we must renounce our own and accept His, and so suffer Him to be made wisdom unto us; since God's mercy is manifested to us only through Him, we must not look for mercy from any other source; since strength to resist sin and perform duty is only to be found in Him, we must seek to be always animated by His love and sustained by His Spirit. We must not stop short of this submission of will and affection, and obedience of life to Him, for we cannot come unto Him by mere knowledge or mere belief, but must sincerely accept of Him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, not separating what God has joined together, not supposing that we can be in Him unless He be also in us. Salvation has two aspects, but is not two things. Christ is the whole of salvation. We

in Him, this is our justification; He in us, this is our sanctification; we in Him and He in us, this is perfect redemption; and he who comes to Christ at all must receive Him as a perfect redemption—as not only eternal life for him, but a present life in Him.

Thus Christ is come to. And now, let me add, take heed that it is Christ you come to—He Himself, and no mere notion, doctrine, or system about Him. "Come unto *me*" is His invitation here, and He constantly demands attachment to His person as the first duty, the essential characteristic of His disciples. "Come, and follow me." "Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me." "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His glory." Christianity cannot be detached from Christ, cannot be received as abstract truth. It must be received as truth embodied in the person of the Almighty Son of God and perfect man, Christ Jesus. The holiest doctrines, even the blessed doctrines of sacrifice and forgiveness, separated from love to the living Saviour, have no sanctifying virtue in them; yea, even that salt, when thus cast out and trodden under

foot of men, loses its divine savour. It is not to a principle or precept, an abstract creed or impersonal cause, we yield ourselves when we become Christians, but to another will than our own, another self, another person, Christ our Lord. The doctrines of atonement and justification by faith are glorious doctrines if we make a right use of them; but if we abuse them, if we put them in the place of Christ Himself, they will prove miserable saviours. What think ye of Christ? What place does He occupy in your heart and life? Is He a mere name for certain doctrines? or is He that Jesus of Nazareth who lived and laboured, suffered and died, for you, and is now at the right hand of God, to hear your confessions and answer your prayers, to comfort you in your sorrows, and deliver you in your trials, to guide and bless you?

If it be wrong, however, to separate the truths which Christ taught from His person, I forget not that it is also wrong to separate His person from the truths He taught. Take away the person of Christ from what He taught, separate His principles from Himself, and you leave us a mere creed with no life in it, and, of course, with no power to impart life. Take away, on the other hand, what our Lord taught from His person, attempt to show us Christ apart

from the general system of truth He has made Himself known to us by, and you leave us to mere ecstasy and mysticism. The only Christ who will profit us is the Christ offered to us in the Gospel. If we would come to Christ, no word of His own, no word of God about Him, must be indifferent to us, but all must, in the measure of our knowledge, be humbly and gratefully received, treasured up in our hearts and practised in our lives, as a revelation of Christ for our acceptance, for our obedience to the invitation of the text.

We have now to consider what Christ promises to those who come unto Him. He says He will give them "rest." What are we to understand by that? Text and context both make clear what it is. It is rest from labour and heaviness—rest not from work, but from what makes work painful and toilsome. Rest from work is inactivity, which God never made man for, and which, instead of conferring happiness on him, would make his life intolerable. The rest which Christ offers us is to be found not in the absolute abandonment of work, but in the doing of His work. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls." Come to me and follow me; imitate my example, bear whatever

God lays on you in the same sprit as I do, not proudly, not impatiently, but humbly and lovingly: do this, and you will get rest. Look to me, learn of me. I have many burdens to bear, none ever had burdens so many or so heavy, yet, amidst them all, beneath them all, I have rest—true, sure, eternal; carry your burdens in the same way, and you will enjoy of the same rest. That was what Christ said; that rest not *from* work, but *in* work, was what He promised. It is a rest like that which God, Christ, and the angels have, who are ever working, and yet ever resting. It is not the merely negative rest of inaction, but the positive rest which flows from the free and orderly exercise of the faculties and the satisfaction of the desires. It is exemption indeed from the pain of work, from labour and heaviness, from what makes work a burden, from more work than our strength will stand, or work of such a nature that our will and feelings revolt against it; but it is enjoyment as well, and enjoyment of the deepest and purest kind. He who has it is not so much secured against burdens and sorrows, as put in possession of a strength by which burdens are made light, of a secret by which sorrow is made to yield joy, as to the hero of old out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

This rest can be had in Christ by coming to Him, as has been described, and abiding in Him, but from no other source, and in no other way can it be had. Christ gives with loving heart and bounteous hand to every labouring and heavy-laden soul that comes to Him "rest"—the beginnings of it in this life, the fulness of it in the future life. Let me show briefly that He does so.

The sense of weariness and heaviness of soul was referred to four causes—to affliction, to disappointed desires, to guilt, to sin. What, then, does Christ do for His people in regard to each of these? Afflictions, we are all aware, He does not exempt them from so long as they are in this present world. While here rest from affliction, in the sense of absence of affliction, it is contrary to His plan, contrary both to His goodness and wisdom, to grant them. He will fulfil His promise in that sense also when they shall have entered into the perfect rest of heaven. There He shall "wipe away all tears from every eye; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." But until the former things have passed away, and especially until sin has passed away, sorrow must be, affliction is needed and good. Believers have, ac-

cordingly, their share of all the ordinary ills that flesh is heir to, and they have sorrows even peculiar to themselves. The Gospel, when it enters into a heart, brings with it sorrows as well as joys not previously experienced. It deadens none of the sensibilities to suffering—it quickens those that are moral. True, it is not the cause but the occasion of these new griefs; sin in ourselves or others, sin seen as it never was before, is the real cause; yet if there had been no spiritual life, there would have been, of course, no spiritual pain, and spiritual pain is not pleasant but painful, yea, of all pain the most painful. The Gospel is not the source of moral grief, but it unlocks it, opens it up, and lets its waters flow forth. But notwithstanding all this, Christ gives, even in regard to affliction to those who come to Him, much rest in this present world. His own life of suffering, and His teaching about suffering, and the strength of the Holy Spirit which He has obtained to enable suffering to be rightly borne, have altogether changed the character of suffering for those who love Him. He has been careful not to destroy it, but He has converted the evil of it into good. He has rendered it precious, so that its preservation to believers is one of the mercies of God. He has, by His example, doctrine, and Spirit, en-

abled them to glory in affliction, and to count it, even when most severe, "all joy"—pure joy, nothing but joy. He has, in a word, given them in affliction a rest, a positive satisfaction, which physical pain or mental sorrow cannot reach either to disturb or destroy, and which may be great in proportion to the very intensity of the pain and sorrow.

Again, Christ gives those who come to Him rest from all those desires which, being doomed inevitably to disappointment, exhaust the strength and ruin the happiness of the soul. There is no real satisfaction for the heart in any created object. It has been made to find its rest in the Creator, and must be restless until it rest in Him, which it can only do through Christ, the union between the Father and the Son being so intimate that no man can come unto the Father except through the Son. When our desires, however, are all centred in Christ, and other things are cared for and followed after only in accordance with His will, and in the measure that the supreme affection due to Him allows, then the soul enjoys rest; not the rest which results from the absence of desire (for that is the rest of death), but the rest which results from the full and legitimate satisfaction of desire, which is the rest of life in its utmost vigour. Before the Fall, man was

happy, because he desired only what he needed, and obtained all that he desired. Since the Fall, man has been unhappy, because what he needed he has not desired, and what he did not need he has desired. Sin has broken up the proper connection between our desires and our wants. Christ restores it: He leads us through the effectual working of His Spirit to seek everything in Himself, everything in conformity to His own righteous will, and then bestows on us everything we seek: He makes every desire the expression of a real want, and then gratifies every desire. He thus delivers us from the restlessness which perverse desires must ever produce, and gives us the rest which the satisfaction of legitimate desires must ever produce.

Again, Christ removes from conscience the awful load of guilt. You remember how in 'Pilgrim's Progress' it is only when Christian comes up to the cross that his burden loosens from off his shoulders, and falls from off his back, and disappears in the sepulchre standing open a little below. Ah! John Bunyan, "the Jerusalem sinner saved," knew well the truth of that part of his wondrous dream. The sacrifice of Christ can alone give us assurance of the Divine forgiveness. We may doubt every other evidence of God's readiness to show mercy and

grace to sinners, but there is no arguing against it possible in presence of the fact, that He has given His own Son even unto death for us. Dull indeed must be the mind, and hard the heart, that can resist that. O my friends, let us not dare to think God cannot love us, great although our guilt be; for look to Calvary, and behold there how He does love us,—behold there, in those death-agonies of Jesus which were the climax and completion of a life of self-denial and suffering, a proof of God's forgiving love towards us, before which doubt is at once irrational and profane. Christ's death, apprehended by faith, severs the ties that bind our guilt upon us as a burden which exhausts the strength, extinguishes hope, and destroys happiness; and our souls are able to rise up, in joyous consciousness that the light of God's countenance shines upon them, with the might of a new life. They find rest —rest from the burden of unforgiven guilt.

Finally, Christ gives all who come to Him rest from the power of sin. He gradually overcomes and destroys it in them, replacing it with true holiness. The more they live in the contemplation of His character and in dependence on His Spirit, the more deeply they enjoy this rest from sin, this sweet rest of holiness. They experience more and more the

sufficiency of Divine grace to regulate their nature and conduct, and as evil grows feebler within them, and their affections come to cling more exclusively and closely to God, the peace and joy of the spiritual life widen and deepen into the great sea of heavenly blessedness, where all is calm because all is holy, where rest is unbroken, where rolls no wave of sin or any trouble.

Will you come? Will you hearken to the invitation of Him whom God hath sent to save you—whose own most earnest desire is to save you? God grant that you do. Life and death—the rest of heaven and the misery of hell—are set before you. Make your choice, as men and women on whom God has conferred the gift of reason, and having made your choice, act on it unto the end, as well aware how great will be the recompense of reward. Meekly suffer and nobly strive as Jesus has shown you how to do, and

> "Soon shalt thou fight and bleed no more,
> Soon, soon thy weary course be o'er,
> And deep the rest thou then shalt taste."

May God, for Christ's sake, bestow His blessing on what has now been said, and to His name be praise, honour, and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON III.

THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH.

"*Thy kingdom come.*"—MATTHEW vi. 10.

IT is of the utmost importance that we form a correct conception of the kingdom which Christ here teaches us to pray for. It obviously cannot be the divine dominion over physical nature, since that is already absolute and perfect. The least things there and the greatest, the speck of dust and the solar system, are alike subject. There is nothing, not even a single movement, in the material world, out of place—other than what God would have it to be. But human nature is not as obedient as physical nature. The will of the Lord is not as supreme actually, as it is rightfully, over the will of man. Good and holy although His will be, it is often contested and set aside. It is so whenever evil is preferred to good, whenever a wrong action is committed instead of a right one. That God's will is thus on innumer-

able occasions displaced by man's wicked will, is an indubitable fact; and if any theory of the Divine sovereignty cannot or will not accept it, so much the worse for the theory. Theories must conform to facts, not facts to theories. True, the Divine sovereignty is also in a sense a fact, as every true theory is; but its precise nature as a fact must be ascertained from an examination of those very acts of man's will, and those very events of man's history, which manifest his power to reject God's will for his own. It is from a scrutiny of all these acts and events that the truth about it must be evolved, and by them that it must be finally tested; so that, when any doctrine, any general statement, regarding the Divine sovereignty gainsays a fact of consciousness or of history, it is self-condemned, as mingling assumption with what is the only legitimate foundation of a theory of Providence, with observation—as assigning to the fictions of the mind an equal or even greater authority than to the realities of experience.

Laying all assumptions apart, and confining ourselves wholly to what may be observed, this is what we learn regarding Providence. The human race has had a history. Generations after generations have come and gone like the leaves of the forest, but that

history has proceeded onwards without break, without stoppage, in obedience to laws the knowledge of which we are only yet groping after. There has been progress, order, plan, from the first day of man's creation down to this present hour, yet man himself has been ignorant of it, and heedless of it. The very conception is a modern one, and is vague, inadequate, and in manifold ways positively erroneous, even in the highest minds of our time. Few have had the slightest glimpse of the order which yet embraced their every action; fewer still have sought to conform to it. From first to last, from the beginning of human history until now, the immense majority of our race have set before them ends of their own, narrow and mean schemes merely for personal good; and yet, although it has been so, and in the midst of confusion, tumult, and war—the progress, order, plan, I speak of, has been slowly and silently but surely built up. God's eternal purpose has stood fast, His decree has been brought about, and yet the men who have accomplished it have not meant to do so; nay, they have been as ignorant of the Divine plan they were realising, as the bees are of the mathematical principles on which they construct the cells of their honeycombs. Man boasts proudly of his reason; "He is not like the

lower creatures; he knows what he does." Does he? *There* is something he has been doing without knowing it; where his reason has been as blind as any brute's instinct; where all generations and tribes and nations have been, in spite of what opposition their pride and selfishness could give, firmly although unconsciously in God's grasp. When we look up at the heavens which God has made, and ponder on what science tells us of the systems of worlds above us, all proceeding in their courses with perfect regularity, we cannot but humble ourselves in adoration before a present reigning God; yet all the evidences of His power and wisdom to be traced in the starry firmament, or any other portion of the material universe, ought to impress us much less, *I think*, than the sight of how He brings order and His own holy purpose out of the confusion and conflict of millions of human wills which seek merely their own pleasure and good. Yea, verily, the Lord reigneth. Our conviction of that cannot be too strong nor confident. It is what our eyes see; it is what day unto day utters in our hearing.

Yet how easy it is to mingle arbitrary hypothesis with legitimate observation, and form the most perverse judgments on events in consequence—or rather, I should say, how difficult to avoid doing so. It is

a fact and no theory, it is a matter admitting of the most certain historical proof, that God has embraced within a system of order, the deeds recorded in the darkest and most blood-stained pages of the annals of the world. If we see not this, it is merely because we have not yet learned to read these pages. In the barbarian invasions, in the feudal system, in the papacy, in battles, conquests, massacres, revolutions, we who can look back on them calmly from the distance, perceive that God has been present, not suffering them to fall out of His hand, but making them work together for good, and compelling the very iniquity and wrath of man to praise Him. History can certify all this to the fullest extent, but how few of those who have philosophised on history have adequately received this conviction without going farther, without going on to the acceptance (virtual and silent, or explicit and avowed) of such maxims as these—that everything is for the best—that evil has been as necessary as good—that every monstrous personage and deplorable period have been as needful and as useful as the holiest of saints and most heroic of epochs—that despotism has been the parent of liberty, and social crime of social virtue—that evil is but good in the making—that this world is the best possible—that

not a bad man nor a sin could have been spared, nor their place supplied by a good man nor a virtue, without the world being the worse for the want or the change;—maxims like these, which underlie and pervade much written history, and most speculations on history, of the present day.

If they be true, however, we are but fools to pray "Thy kingdom come," and in doing so ask we know not what. If true, the origin of evil is a mystery no longer, but is quite explained—by being quite explained away. If true, there is nothing left in human history or human life for conscience to decide upon. If true, all those aspirations after a better order of affairs than at present exists upon earth—all those aspirations which progress owes its life and strength to, and which no disappointments nor hardships can destroy where they have once gained possession of the mind and heart—are vain and futile; and Christ erred when He gave His sanction to them, as He here in our text most assuredly did. But confronted by such maxims, threatened with such consequences, I demur and deny. I do so in the name of history itself, asserting that more conscientious studies, more careful inquiries, more adequate and exact analyses of phenomena, would prove that, strictly speaking, evil is never transferred or transformed into good;

that from pure evil nothing but evil comes, and that it seems to be otherwise only because in all evil men and actions and ages there are elements of good mingled with the evil, which account for all the good that ever proceeds from them. I do so also in the name of right reason, of logic. It is no argument, as so many seem to think it is, that since evil is, and since God is of infinite wisdom, it must be better that there should be what evil there is than that it should not be, or than that good should be. Wisdom is shown in the choice of alternatives, and these are in the present case not evil or no evil, still less evil or good, but evil or the miraculous prevention of evil, so that it follows not that because evil exists it must be better, and God see it to be better, for the world that it should exist than that it should not —that the world, while seemingly perhaps better, would be really worse without it; it follows merely that it must be better that it should be allowed to exist than that God should directly and miraculously interpose to destroy it, and so cease to govern the world by general laws, or than that He should deal with mankind in a way contrary to their natures as free agents. That is all which sound reason gives us any warrant to conclude, and it allows us to interpret facts as we find them, which what may be

called historical optimism does not, binding us down to decisions perplexing to morality; is enough to vindicate the divine procedure; leaves evil in origin still unexplained and in nature still detestable; leaves room for our believing it opposed to God's will, and rebellion against His government, so that wherever it is there His kingdom has not yet come, and He is robbed of that sovereignity which He is most jealous of.

We may see, then, so far what kingdom it is for the coming of which we are here taught to pray. It is the kingdom of divine power and grace over man's will, its acts and results, of divine order and righteousness in man's life and all its relations. In the measure that human caprice is replaced by divine law, human perversity by divine holiness, this kingdom is advanced; and, as the very position of the text in the prayer of which it forms a part suggests to us, when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven, then it will have fully come. It is the grand theme of the whole Bible; yea, throughout all history a certain groaning after it may be heard, a certain groping after it may be traced. Nature itself seems to travail in pain and sigh to be renewed. God foretold the victory over evil and reign of righteousness in which His kingdom consists to our

first parents after their first disobedience. The most ancient patriarchs were cheered and strengthened to walk on earth as pilgrims seeking a better country by the mere hope of it. Jacob in his hour of death hailed its future glories. David sang of it in his sweetest and most rapturous strains. Daniel in his visions saw the four great monarchies of the world coming only to make way for this greater and better and heavenly kingdom, imaged by the stone cut out of the mountains without hands and filling the whole earth. John the Baptist came crying unto men to prepare themselves for the approach of its King. Our Saviour told the Jews of His day that it was "at hand," that it was "near," that it was "presently to be manifested," that it was "among them," that it was "come to them," that it was "preached to them." He, by His life, sufferings, and death, firmly established it, and since His departure from earth it has always been gradually advancing in defiance of opposition, spreading ever more widely over the world, and pervading ever more thoroughly all the relations of human life. It has had many obstacles to encounter, many hard struggles to go through, many martyrs have died for it, but still its course has been one of continuous and wondrous triumph.

I fear that this conception of a kingdom of God

on earth occupies not in modern religious systems and modern religious life a position similar to the one it holds in the Bible. It is central there, but it is very far from being central in contemporary thought and practice. Much of the religious teaching and preaching of the age, when sifted, comes simply to this, "Keep heaven and earth as widely apart in your interests and affections as you can—withdraw your energies of mind and heart from earth as much as you can, direct them towards heaven as much as you can—hold the terrestrial and the celestial life as utterly distinct, if not antagonistic, so that whatever is given to the one is taken from the other." The great duty of man is set forth as being to get out of earth into heaven, and not as being to set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. I dare to think that we have erred in leaving the old path; that that old path is the only true and divine one; that the notion that the kingdom of God which is to be the great aim of our aspirations and endeavours, is a kingdom quite separate from earth, where a selfish safety may be sought and found, not a kingdom of righteousness, extending indeed to heaven but commencing on earth—entered into on earth through repentance and faith—established on earth through self-denial and holiness—is a false and

pernicious notion, which every man who wishes well to his fellows or loves the faith once delivered to the saints must contend earnestly against. The kingdom of God is not meant to separate, but to unite heaven and earth, to embrace both in one, to sanctify the lower through the higher, and to admit into the higher through the lower. He who would reach the top must begin at the bottom. He who does not enter into the kingdom of heaven here will not be able to enter into it elsewhere.

The kingdom of God begins within. The tree of evil has its root in the heart, and the axe must be laid to the root, so that the tree, the whole tree, may be cut down and cast into the fire. It is as victory over sin in the soul, as order, righteousness, peace in the soul—an order, righteousness, and peace founded on Christ's sacrifice and produced by the Holy Spirit—that the kingdom of God arises. But what is within must manifest itself without. The law of our Lord Jesus Christ has the same claims to rule society as to rule the individual. It is a law for the whole race. Christ is the rightful head of the whole race, of every man, of every tribe, of every nation. Humanity without Him presents to view only the scattered and bleeding members of a gigantic but lifeless, aimless, torn, and mutilated

body. It has no centre of unity, no coherence of parts, no ruling intelligence, no pervading life, no common aim. Oh, that we felt this as we ought! To know and acknowledge Christ as the King of our race, to take the place and do the work His will and grace assign us, to persuade our fellow-men by speech and example to do the same,—this, this is to bring in that kingdom which all creation sighs for, wherein no man raises his hand to oppress or hurt his brother man, wherein dwelleth righteousness, freedom, peace, joy. "Thy kingdom come." Let that be the wish of our hearts and the petition of our lips, but let it also be our cry of onset and word of rallying in the battle of life. God calls us to His help against the mighty. He calls us to earnest warfare for the true King and right kingdom. May He give us also grace to hear and to obey.

When the kingdom of God on earth is not virtually denied altogether, it is sometimes conceived of in a very inadequate and unworthy way. The most common and not the least pernicious of the erroneous notions entertained about it is that of those who imagine it to be the Church, and the Church an outward organisation, a society represented by certain recognised officers and courts, by synods and assemblies, councils and convocations, and things of that

kind. In the eyes of such persons the power and progress of the Church so conceived of is the measure of the power and progress of the kingdom of God, and the rights of its courts are coextensive with the crown-rights of Christ.

Now I cannot think this opinion correct. It seems to me that the Church so understood is very distinct indeed from the kingdom of God. It seems to me even that the kingdom of God has been advancing just as the Church has been retrograding in power. The kingdom of God, we might almost say, has made its progress at the expense of the Church. When the Church had its greatest power, the kingdom of God had almost vanished from society. Society has been brought more and more into the kingdom of God, as the Church has gradually ceased to claim any direct and immediate control over it. The Church of the darkest period of the Middle Ages included within itself all the elements of social life, and exercised authority over them all. Its decisions were laws everywhere, and over everything. But as it emerged from the Middle Ages, one form of human activity, one social institution after another, separated from it, asserted its independence, and made good the assertion.

The State first separated itself from the Church,

to which a continuous course of subtle yet bold aggression had made it subject. It recovered its independence—it became laic, and not ecclesiastical. This step was virtually made considerably before the Reformation, and was an immense step towards the Reformation. When the Reformation came, it did not attempt to make mankind retrace this step; it sanctioned and secured it. In all the countries of the Reformation, even in England, where, owing to causes deeply seated in the national character and history, the constitution of the Church was least changed, the ecclesiastical power no longer makes any serious pretensions to the direction and control of the civil power. But the Reformation itself did not effect that absolute separation between the civil and ecclesiastical which has been gradually realised since. That is nowhere more evident than in the history of the Church of Scotland. It for very long concentrated within itself most of that power which is now exerted by various separate and distinct agencies—as by the press, by public meetings, by poor's boards, by town-councils, by Parliament, no less than by the Church courts. The unhappy splitting-up of our Church by controversies into many denominations has, without doubt, immensely and perhaps unduly weakened the eccle-

siastical power of each denomination, and even of them all combined; but if the Church had remained intact, if there had never been such a thing as dissent from it, the direct power of the Church over the nation would, notwithstanding, have diminished. The progress of the people in civilisation, their growing activity and energy, the application of other organs and agencies for the expression of their thoughts and purposes, would of themselves have infallibly in process of time brought about the result which we now witness. The warfare of sects has only hastened what was inevitable, although we may safely say that it was the very last thing any of these sects desired. But man proposes, and God disposes. The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.

It is not the State only, however, that has freed itself from the authority and control of the Church. It did so first, perhaps, but afterwards Art gained for itself the same independence. It was once entirely under the dominion of the Church. Its emancipation has been long ago complete. Literature followed in the same route, and has reached the same goal. It began to declare its independence before the Reformation, and now enjoys that independence to the fullest extent. Then came the Reformation, when the greatest advance of all was

made. Protestantism, by laying down the principle of private judgment, declared the individual man free—declared the spiritual independence of man on every one but his God; and now, although the officials and representatives of all the Churches of the whole earth were assembled into one convocation, still, if even that vast and venerable council dared to dictate what was to be held as true, and what rejected as false—dared to assume the office of deciding absolutely on spiritual matters—its tyranny would be insufferable. All the braver and better men of our time would refuse to allow even so imposing an outward authority as that to stand between them and God—would refuse to sacrifice the rights of reason and of conscience at the bidding even of such a council. Science, later still, broke away from the Church, and if on one or two points its independence be not fully secured, no one can reasonably doubt that even on these points it soon will, and that the very last link of the chain which bound it in subjection will be severed. Meanwhile the general independence of Science is undeniable and undenied. The Church does not dare to dream of imposing restrictions or commands upon it, so far as the interpretation of nature is concerned, even in its most recent and feeble departments.

Now it is quite manifest that none of these elements of social life, none of these forms of human activity, will ever return into the bosom of the Church again. It has cost humanity too much to separate each one of them from the grasp of the Church, and humanity has gained too much by the separation, when once accomplished, for it to allow of anything of the kind. The Church has lost its authority over these things for ever, and her loss has been the world's gain. Well, what does this amount to? Are we to conclude that all these things have become atheistical, irreligious, unchristian, because they have separated themselves from the Church, asserted rights of their own, and jealously guard these rights? Assuredly no. The Church is not the kingdom of God, and these elements of social life, in separating themselves from the Church, have not separated themselves from the kingdom of God; nay, by the very act of rejecting the control of the Church they set aside the mediation of the Church between them and the kingdom of God, and secured for themselves, as a portion of their independence, the right of standing in immediate contact with the Word and kingdom of God. Before their independence they were related to the kingdom of God only through their connection with the Church; now,

since their independence, they may justly claim to be portions of the kingdom of God, each one of them as much a portion of it as the Church itself. If their aims be bad and worldly, of course they are not of the kingdom of God, but opposed to it; the aims of the Church are, however, often bad and worldly, and then it no more belongs to the kingdom of God than they do. When sanctified, when their aims are good and holy, then they are no less of the kingdom of God than it is.

If this, then, be the kingdom of God, when we pray that it may come to any man, we ask that he should, from knowledge and love of the truth, fulfil his duties not to some Church only, but in every relation of life; and when we ask that it may come to a nation, we pray not merely that all its members may profess the faith of Christ, not even that they may do so sincerely, but that the whole life of that nation may become Christian. It is to implore that God would take away, would clean destroy for ever, all that corrupts and debases our race either in its individual members or communities, and that He would abundantly bestow and firmly establish all that comforts, strengthens, and elevates it. And when we try to act on our prayer, as we are manifestly bound to do, when we not merely give God

these three words, "Thy kingdom come," which, however sincerely given, are surely not all that is demanded from us, but give our endeavours and means also to establish God's kingdom, we must never forget what it is; we must never forget that to set up the kingdom of God is indeed to plant churches, but to do vastly more than that—even to alter and transform the whole dispositions and activities of a people. This is not to be done exclusively through the Church. The kingdom of God is not to be established among us in this country solely by the services of the sanctuary, or directly religious exercises and instruction. A legislator by obtaining good laws, a poet by writing ennobling verses, a country gentleman by an active interest in the well-being of those who are on his estates and in his own neighbourhood, and every class of men by the faithful discharge of their special duties in commerce or trade, science or art, may help and hasten on the coming of the kingdom of God without entering into the ecclesiastical sphere of action. When Christians speak contemptuously about any kind of social reforms and moral improvements in a nation, when they fancy that as Christians these matters concern them not, they show great and lamentable blindness to the true nature of that kingdom which Christ

died to set up on earth, and which He desires us to pray and labour for.

These remarks are as applicable in regard to the extension of God's kingdom over lands where it is not yet known, as to its perfect establishment in lands where it is already received in part. The influence of the British Churches is not the only power which ought to act from this country on India in setting up God's kingdom there. The kingdom of God in Britain is not merely the Church in Britain. Government, education, literature, art, science, and morality, these, sanctified and guided by the Word and Spirit of God, are all ways in which His kingdom, in the measure that it has been realised in this country, ought to operate in the establishment of His kingdom in India and elsewhere. Intelligent Christians will rejoice with a deep and solemn joy alike when they hear of earnest and pious men devoting themselves to the arduous work of diffusing through India a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and when a great and good man is placed at the head of its affairs, for they will see in both events steps towards the accomplishment of what is the incessant prayer of their hearts, "Thy kingdom come."

The immense influence of the Church of the

Middle Ages lay in this, that she held in her grasp all the elements of social life, and yielded as she pleased all the powers of society. These elements have escaped from the grasp of the Church; these powers are no longer hers to yield. But if lost to the Church, which embraces only a part of the activities of men, it does not follow that they should be lost to the kingdom of God, which embraces all the activities of man. What is needed is, that men should clearly recognise that all these different agencies for good, no longer united in the Church, are still, and must for ever be, united in the kingdom of God, and ought all to be employed by those who are members of that kingdom for its wider extension and more thorough establishment. The weakness of modern society, on the other hand, has been that its various powers have remained, after their severance from the Church, separated from one another, giving no help, but often active opposition to one another. The only remedy for that is that we should recognise their relationship to one another through recognition of their relationship to the kingdom of God. Then we shall no longer have the spectacle of men eager to send Bibles and missionaries to other lands, while perfectly ignorant or indifferent whether as members of the State they

are not assenting to or assisting in what more than counteracts all the good they seek to effect as members of the Church; but we shall have every power through which Christ's Gospel can express itself again combined, all the forces of God's kingdom mustered together, and put in orderly array to defeat the legions of the adversary, that the empire of the world may be wrested from his tyranny, and the Lord Most High have that dominion which is His due.

Far be it from me to depreciate by these remarks the dignity of the Church, or the importance of the work which is specially its own. Although it is a grievous error, requiring to be faithfully exposed, to suppose it the sole agency that is to introduce, extend, and establish the kingdom of God, it has always been, now is, and ever must be, the foremost and most powerful agency; and if other powers do not rally round it, do not freely receive impulse and guidance from it, they will accomplish little. It is of vast importance, nevertheless, that it know its own place and do its own work—that it understand above all its relation to the kingdom of God, which is what determines its place and work. Error on this point has given rise to evils the number and seriousness of which it is scarcely possible to exaggerate.

But for such error the world, I think, would have been spared the "divine-right" theories of Episcopacy, Presbytery, and Independency,—which would have been a great gain and comfort to the world. But for such error it would have been spared also, to a great extent, if not entirely, the controversy on "the headship of Christ" which has raged so long and fiercely in our land—a controversy now hopelessly unintelligible—a chaos out of which no intellect can bring sense or order.

A true conception of the kingdom of God in itself and in relation to the Church would have, among many other advantageous results, these:*—

* The advantages which I mention in the discourse itself are those which bear upon practical conduct, and I would therefore here indicate one which belongs to theological science. The history of the Christian religion can only be adequately described as the history of the kingdom of God on earth, and not as the history of the Church, still less as the history of a Church. A Roman Catholic cannot take his stand on this, the true point of view. He must start with the assumption that the kingdom of God is identical with the Church of Rome, and condemn every departure from that Church as rebellion against the dominion of Jesus Christ. He must regard the national life of all the peoples of Europe who have felt most powerfully the impulse given by the Reformation, and freed themselves from the Papal yoke, as essentially anti-Christian. The theory of development employed in Germany by Möhler, in France by De Maistre, in England by Newman, faulty as it is, is the most comprehensive and philosophical conception of Church history, perhaps, possible within the Roman Catholic Church; and of course the Reformation presents to a Roman Catholic a barrier beyond which the application of the theory is impossible. It is only from a Protestant historian, then, that we can hope for a history of Christianity, starting from, and determined by, a true and adequate idea of the kingdom of God; and there has been a continuous progress since the Reformation in this direction. The

First, It would save from the absurdity and injustice of contrasting the Church with the world, when by the world is meant the kingdom of evil. The kingdom of God forms a true contrast to the kingdom of Satan, since these two kingdoms meet, exclude, and oppose each other at all points; but that contrast is far from equivalent to the distinction between the Church and the world—to the division of things into ecclesiastical and secular. It is not

Protestant historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had recourse to history chiefly in order to draw from it weapons of defence and attack against Romanism, and misrepresented the centuries before the Reformation in the most violently unjust and uncharitable manner. Gottfried Arnold, a representative of the Pietistic movement of Spener and Franke, introduced another, but we can scarcely say more comprehensive, conception. He sought to trace through the ages the presence of a so-called invisible Church, to discover and exhibit the operations of grace in genuinely pious hearts. The result was a singularly exclusive and partial estimate of the development of Christian truth and life; all sorts of heretics and enthusiasts being selected for eulogy as children of God and members of this invisible Church, while Roman Catholicism and dominant Protestantism were alike dealt with as if deserted of the Spirit of grace. Arnold and his followers, such as Milner, did service by insisting that the history of religion is not to be severed from practical piety, but no solid or liberal work could be based upon the notion of an invisible Church. The historical school, represented by Mosheim, Schröck, Walch, &c., instead of intrenching itself in a proud and hostile spirit within the narrow stronghold of some particular confession, endeavoured to do justice to all parties, and to find sense in all systems. The explanation of events, however, which it gave was shallow and external. It made no serious, no successful attempt to refer outward events and realised systems to permanent and essential causes. It described changes, but failed to show that they were not arbitrary and accidental—that they were manifestations of a process of growth, and regulated by laws of growth. A rationalistic school succeeded, the bold criticism of which was useful, but which, treating as it did all received doctrines on the

more certain that every Church with its courts is in the world in the sense of having a local habitation and a name on the earth, than that the world as kingdom of Satan is in every Church, even the purest. No Church is wholly within the kingdom of God, and wholly without the kingdom of Satan, in its office-bearers, or constitution, or decisions, or deeds. So far as right is concerned, every social agency ought to belong to the kingdom of God as

Trinity, atonement, sin, grace, &c., as perversions of primitive Christian truth, virtually reduced the whole history of Christianity into a history of the corruptions of Christianity, and must be regarded, from our present point of view, as a retrogressive movement. The next step taken was a very great advance. Neander's principal work is the best type and most valuable product of the new school. In that work science and faith, the fullest research and the deepest piety, are seen in beautiful and blessed union, proving, as they can do only when in union, that the truth and grace of Christ have been present in all ages and Churches. Yet even this noble history is not based upon an adequate conception of the kingdom of God. No thought, indeed, was more dear to Neander than that the Gospel must, like leaven in meal, permeate and transform the world; but in his History he has only sought to trace its influence on individual piety, the apprehension of Christian truth, and ecclesiastical activity, disregarding its operation on speculation and art, political and social life. Since Neander some have approached a little more closely than he, in general conception at least, to the true goal, others have fallen farther back from it, others have widely missed it,—none have quite reached it. But what the true goal is, or that it may be reached, there can be no doubt. I shall only add that it is a strange, a startling fact, suggestive of how little Scotland has participated in the progress of religious science so far as regards the department of history, that the recently published work of the late Dr Cunningham—'Historical Theology'—while remarkable both for the learning and intellectual force which so eminently distinguished its lamented author, should yet start from the essentially narrow sixteenth-century point of view—the lowest stage of Protestant historiography.

well as the Church; and, so far as fact is concerned, the Church may as decidedly not be of the kingdom of God, and antagonistic to it, as any social agency. If we do not bear this in mind, we shall inevitably under-estimate what is secular, and over-estimate what is ecclesiastical; with the former we shall have no sympathy,—to the latter we shall assign an undue importance; what God hath cleansed we shall call common, and traditions of men we shall receive as ordinances of Christ. Thus a narrow and false mode of looking at life and judging of events will possess and pervert our judgments.

Secondly, The true conception I speak of would save us from giving more than due importance to questions which will otherwise occupy and agitate our minds to an excessive and injurious extent. If the character of the Church had been sufficiently realised as a means, and not as an end, men would have been disinclined at least, if not ashamed, to expend the altogether disproportioned amount of energy they have done on controversies about the constitution and government of their churches, when compared with what they have put forth in actually establishing the kingdom of God. It is as unhealthy for a Church as for an individual to have its attention constantly concentrated on itself, its own con-

stitution, its own rights and privileges, instead of on its work. But what else can be looked for when the Church is confounded with the kingdom of God —when out of the Church it is assumed that there is only the kingdom of evil? These miserable controversies become momentous matters then,—life-and-death struggles for Christ's kingdom. If Christ is to be King at all, the notion is He must be King here, for He is King nowhere else. But O by such blind contests what a contemptible kingship we get for Him!—a mere acknowledged special kingship over church courts, including a virtual denial of His real kingship everywhere. A mock king we make of Him, and then stand by, passive and self-complacent, while He is robbed of His rights all around us, and Satan's sway is almost undisputed.

Thirdly, It would save the Church from encroachment on spheres not its own. Modern history, as we have seen, has been characterised throughout by the various agencies of society successively asserting and establishing their independence on the Church. There may be certain respects in which that has gone too far, but there are other respects in which it has not yet reached its legitimate issues. It is quite as common to see churches take positions with regard to the State which they cannot

maintain, because essentially unjust, as to see the State encroach upon churches. Science has yet to be freer than it is, where the Bible, not nature, is the basis thereof. The creeds and confessions of most churches, however doctrinally correct, are of an extent and minuteness of decision objectionable, not only on the ground of perpetuating disunion between equally sincere Christians, but as capable of being made, in the hands of unscrupulous or excited majorities, formidable instruments of terrorism and oppression. Now it is only through clear recognition of what its relationship to the kingdom of God is, that a church can adjust itself to the other agencies and powers of society, and know what its own sphere is; where, consequently, it is requisite to yield, and where to resist—where, when, and how.

Finally, It would save the Church from desertion of its true work. That work is not the direct and immediate control of any of the powers of society, but it is the indirect and mediate control of all the powers of society. It is a glorious work—the sanctification of society in all its elements, agencies, and relations by "the word of truth." The Church may not lay its commands upon other institutions, as if it belonged to the kingdom of God, and they not, but has to teach them that, by right if not in

fact, they belong to the kingdom of God as much as itself, that thus awakening them—art, literature, science, commerce, government—to a sense of their true dignity, of their high vocation, they may walk worthy of it. To bring men under the influence of that holy and blessed Word which "giveth life," and is "the power of God unto salvation," and to persuade them to act on it in every relationship bravely, faithfully — this is our work as members of the Church; and O! if we only felt the work to be as momentous as it is, what intensity it would give to our prayers, and what energy to our actions, that the time might speedily arrive when God's kingdom should have fully come, and righteousness cover the whole earth with the same depth and fulness as the waters do the channels of the great deep.

This glorious hope, my friends, is it yours? Can you triumph in the thought of Christ's triumph? Ah! that depends on whether you are of this kingdom or against it—whether you are Christ's friend or foe. If you will not have this man to rule over you, if you will dare to resist this God, if you will strive to stay or repel the advance of this kingdom, you will perish from the way when His anger begins to burn, and His kingdom will crush over you as it proceeds onwards, conquering and to conquer. But

why resist? Know you not that it is not only Almighty power you oppose, but infinite love? It is King Jesus who seeks our love and service; King Jesus who came forth from the bosom and down from the throne of the Eternal Father, wrapped Himself round with our frail humanity, felt our infirmities, carried our sorrows, endured the contradiction of sinners, sweat great drops as of blood in Gethsemane, bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and now, having ascended up on high, crowns us with the gifts of His grace, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. O King of glory, God of love, let all eyes see Thy glory, let all hearts feel Thy love. Come forth in the might of Thy Spirit. Reign in every soul, in every family, in every church and nation. Reign over the whole earth, that the whole earth may rejoice. Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE SEED.

MATTHEW xiii. 3-8, and 18-23.

THE seven parables contained in this chapter are closely connected with one another. They all relate to the same subject, the Kingdom of Heaven. They describe the origin, progress, and issues of that kingdom, both in the individual and in society. They together form a perfect whole, parable fitting on and in to parable, as limb is joined to limb, member to member, to constitute an animal body.

With these parables our Lord began a new mode of teaching, a fresh and important stage of His ministry. Hitherto He had been engaged in announcing the approach of the long-looked-for Messianic kingdom, explaining what moral requisites were demanded of those who would belong to it, and proving by miracles that its King was already among men. He now began to disclose the

mysteries of the kingdom, its essential truths, its peculiar features. His teaching by parables was in this respect a real and great advance on that which had preceded it, but not so as to form. It was a mode of instruction adapted to the peculiar stage which revelation had reached, but designed to pass away when the truth could be seen and taught in its fulness; excellent, and even indispensable, for "keeping the seed safe till the time should arrive for the quickening Spirit to come down and give it growth," but to be very little employed in future sowings; most suggestive during the period when it was applicable to the intelligent and sincere, but even then calculated to perplex darkened minds and to repel hardened hearts. What has been true in some degree of revelation in every form, was in a special degree true of it in this form,—it added to those who had, but from those who had not it took away even that which they had.

The parables in this chapter derive a special interest and value from standing at the commencement of that period of our Lord's ministry, during which the character of His kingdom was the great theme of His teaching. Some have endeavoured to show that Christ's views as to the nature of His kingdom underwent several essential altera-

tions,—that the final idea forced upon Him by the course of events was a very different idea from that which He cherished when He came forth from the obscurity of Nazareth. And a recent author, whose reputation as a scholar and literary accomplishments have given a remarkably extensive circulation to a superficial and saddening book, would persuade us that, although from the outset of His public career the thought of the near and sudden advent of a Divine kingdom, which should revolutionise and renew all things, was never absent from the mind of Jesus, yet that His ideas regarding its constitution were vague, various, and conflicting. Sometimes it was the reign of the poor and outcast,—His Gospel a Gospel of socialism, Himself a democratic chief; at other times it was the literal accomplishment of the Apocalyptic visions of Daniel and Enoch; and often a kingdom within, dominion over the soul, spiritual deliverance. Ah! learned and amiable doubter, Christ has refuted thee. These seven parables present us with His own sketch of His kingdom. They show us what His general conception of its character really was. They describe it not indeed in its subordinate aspects and lesser features, but in an outline which is not vague, and yet singularly comprehensive. Within that

outline every after-declaration of our Lord on the subject easily finds an appropriate place. It embraces, to a certain extent, all the ideas which the author I refer to has attributed to Christ, for His kingdom was to be a fulfilment of ancient prophecy, and a spiritual kingdom, and a renewal of society, all in one; and in so far as these ideas are comprehended within it, there is truth in them and adequate evidence for them in the recorded words of our Lord, while in so far as they exclude one another, and cannot be reduced under a general idea, cannot be enclosed within the outline drawn by our Lord, they are false in themselves and capriciously extorted from New Testament texts. There is a progress traceable in Christ's disclosures relative to His kingdom. The progress consists, however, not in one idea being taken up, made use of for a time, found to be false and inadequate, and rejected for another, nor in a general conception being gradually obtained from the conflict of several partially contradictory particular ones. No! It consists in the filling up of an outline which was from the commencement so correct as to call for no change either of extension or contraction. It is only when, through want of elevation and breadth of intellect, or some disturbing moral cause, this outline is

vaguely discerned, the general principles which determine it imperfectly understood, that men can fancy they are warranted to attribute to Christ confusion of thought, the belief and utterance of irreconcilable opinions. It is not that they have advanced beyond and risen above the thoughts of Christ, but that they have fallen far behind and below them.*

In the remarkable group of parables contained in this chapter, the parable of the sower is first in the order of nature as well as of position. It stands in its right place—begins at the beginning. Its theme is the origin of the kingdom of God. That origin

* If it be admitted, as surely it must be, that the idea of the kingdom of God was only gradually developed even in the teaching of our Lord, the question immediately arises, Was there a corresponding growth in His mind, a corresponding development in His knowledge? The question is in itself a legitimate one, since our Lord's life on earth, bodily and mental, was conformed to all the laws which God originally impressed on human nature. But very different answers will be given, of course, according to the views taken of the nature of the outward development, the progress in the teaching. If, like Hase or Renan, we suppose that ideas essentially exclusive and false gave place to others which were broader and truer, the correspondence must be regarded as perfect. Christ must have acquired truth in the measure that He made use of it. If, on the contrary, a general plan, such as we contend for, is found at the commencement of His teaching on the subject, then the principal additions afterwards made, although not necessarily minute details, must have been anticipated, and the most accurate history of the outward growth of the idea will still leave us in ignorance, an ignorance which is probably designed and salutary, of the growth of mind in Jesus. This latter, this subjective growth or progress, sound criticism must confess the evangelical records do not enable us to trace.

it traces to "the word," to the diffusion of the truths which God has revealed to man for his guidance and salvation. These truths, it explains, when spread abroad, do not always profit. They have different effects on different minds. The same Divine words addressed to persons of unlike dispositions or characters have correspondingly varied results. They produce in certain cases what they were meant to do, but in others they fail, through no fault of their own, but through the fault of those who hear them. This is illustrated by an analogy or comparison of singularly minute accuracy. The truth or word is like the seed which the husbandman sows, and the dispositions with which it is received are like soils of different kinds, the inherent qualities of which account for the different fates that befall the dispersed seed of the Gospel.

It is not improbable that when our Lord spoke this parable His eye actually looked upon some scene which presented all the features He mentions. There is in a very admirable book of Eastern travel a striking passage to this effect. The author, Dean Stanley, tells us how, as he was riding along by the beach of the Sea of Galilee, he thought of this parable, and seeing nothing but the steep hill-side,

alternately grass and rock, he began to fancy that Christ could not have drawn His images from the scenery actually before Him at the time, but that His mind must have been dwelling on the distant corn-fields of Samaria or Esdraelon. Then he goes on to say,—"The thought had hardly occurred to me, when a slight recess in the hill-side, close upon the plain, disclosed at once, in detail, and with a conjunction which I remember nowhere else in Palestine, every feature of the great parable. There was the undulating corn-field descending to the water's edge. There was the trodden pathway, running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed from falling here or there on either side of it or upon it; itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human feet. There was the good rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood from the bare hills elsewhere descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hill-side, protruding here and there through the corn-fields, as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorns—that kind of which tradition says that the crown of thorns was woven—springing up, like the fruit-trees

of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat."

Christ's eye looked, we may suppose, upon some such scene. Any other eye would have beheld the same outward features of nature; but what eye save His own could have taken in at a glance the whole spiritual significance of what it saw? None. There is something vastly beyond mere genius here. Never man saw so much in a similar spectacle before; never man saw like this man. Nature, which is a sealed book to so many, and to all is a book difficult to read, lay open and clear before Him wherever His eye rested. It is our privilege to know that in the measure in which the Spirit which dwelt in Him without measure dwells in us, the more will our eyes be opened to see as He did —to see through the material and temporal what is Divine and eternal—to see that things on earth are copies of, and made after the pattern of, things in heaven. God grant that to-day we may treasure up in our hearts some of those most precious lessons which, having seen in a fact so simple as the scattering of seed upon the ground, He was pleased to disclose in this parable for our spiritual profit.

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow." There has been considerable discussion as to who is to be

understood by the sower—whether Christ, or the Apostles, or the writers of Scripture, or the Church, or any teacher of Divine truth. The discussion is uncalled for. The aim of the parable is simple and precise—namely, to explain to us what effects the word of God will produce on different hearts. Who sows the word, or how it is sown, is not its subject. Seed must have a sower, and a sower is mentioned, but the sower does not belong to what is essential in the parable; and hence in the exposition of it which our Lord himself gave, nothing is said about the sower; He tells us not who the sower is, but what the seed is. It is true that Christ himself was and is the great Sower, and that others are good sowers only in proportion to the faithfulness and zeal with which they scatter the seed which He has put into their hands, and imitate His manner of sowing. This is the truth taught in many a passage of Scripture, but not the truth this parable was spoken to enforce. Here there is mention of a sower merely because seed does not sow itself, and because the word, which is like seed, implies a speaker.

So likewise the parable does not teach us, as is often said, that the heart alone explains all—that barrenness or fertility in noxious products may not

be due to the sower, the sowing, or the seed, as well as to the soil. It does not say that one sower or way of sowing is as good as another, or that tares may not be sown as well as good grain, and mingled in various proportions with the good grain. But it makes, as every parable does, certain assumptions, and employs them to effect the end in view. It assumes that the seed which is sown is the word of God, or what may be called pure seed, and that as it is sown—it is immaterial, so far as the parable is concerned, by whom or how—it falls on different kinds of soil, is heard by men of different characters and dispositions, and, assuming this, it tells us what the result in each case will be. This is the sphere within which the teaching of the parable is confined, and it is necessary not to go beyond it. There is much greater danger, in the interpretation of parables, of making them say more than they were meant to do, than of making them say less.

The seed "is the word,"—the word of the kingdom —the word of God. The kingdom of grace, which all the parables in this chapter deal with as their common theme, has its origin in the words which God has spoken, the truths which God has revealed, and can be established only upon them. It cannot be built up on the inventions and fancies of

men, however ingenious and beautiful these may seem to be, and still less by force and violence. The seed is the word, and the word is God's message of mercy and truth to our fallen race through Jesus Christ His Son. That may appear small and feeble, but it has the strange vitality in it which makes all seed so marvellous, which makes the mustard-seed grow into a tree that can afford a shelter to the birds of the air; and so it, the seed of the word, is what the mighty kingdom which will yet overshadow and sway all the kingdoms of the earth must spring from. O let us have faith in it, and scatter it with a diligent hand. Much may fall where the foot will trample it down, or the birds devour it, or thorns choke it; but even one grain, striking root in good soil, will produce what may well gladden our hearts, what will far more than repay our most painful exertions.

The good seed of the word fell on four kinds of soil, each of which is descriptive of a special variety of human character. But it is to be observed, although it is strange how few have done so, that in the application of the parable to individuals, these kinds of soil, these varieties of character, are not to be dealt with as exclusive of one another. The hearers of the Gospel cannot be all arranged into

four classes, so distinct that whoever is in any measure in any one class cannot be in any measure in any other. No, each kind of soil is representative not of an individual character, but of a variety or rather type of character. Now no type of human nature explains the whole nature of an actual man. The general complexion and main tendencies of our disposition may leave no doubt as to what particular type we ought to be classed with, and yet many of our qualities both of mind and heart may belong to other moral forms of human nature. Thus there is no unprofitable hearer, perhaps, who is solely a wayside, or a stony-ground, or a thorny-ground hearer, but more or less all these three in one; and the most attentive and successful of hearers will be the readiest to lament that along with such soil as the word of God can penetrate, root itself in, and cover with produce, there still is in their hearts no small proportion of every sort of evil ground. It is not some little separate portion, therefore, of this parable, but the whole of it, which closely concerns every reader and hearer. No one may say, 'This is true of me, but I have no cause to give heed to that; if this apply to me, the rest cannot.' All that is here written is for the reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness of each one of us.

The division of soils, or rather of dispositions represented by soils, is in itself very instructive. It teaches us two lessons at least, which are often forgotten, to the great injury of the cause of truth and righteousness. I know not indeed any errors connected with the preaching of the Gospel, which have had a longer or sadder history than these—the division of men merely into good and bad, believing and incredulous, and the ignoring of the distinction as one always to be implied, as one which must underlie all others. These errors are opposite extremes, equally removed from the truth, which lies between them; the one has been more prevalent in some generations, and the other in others; the one is characteristic of an exaggerated evangelicalism, and the other of a dead moderatism; or, in more general terms, the one is inherent in fanaticism, and the other in formalism; but both are in their exclusiveness condemned by the whole structure of the New Testament, and condemned very plainly in the parable under consideration.

First, I say, we are here shown that exclusive adherence to the twofold division of men into good and evil is unwarranted and unwise. He who ought to be our model in all things, and especially in every question connected with the diffusion of His own

blessed word, here shows us another and far more reasonable mode of procedure. He teaches us that we are neither to overlook that there are varieties among the evil nor degrees among the good—that we are to deal with men as they really are, and closely consider each sort or form of character in its relation to the truth and grace of God. If we do not, our speaking must be both vague and harsh—vague, because confined to the most general of all the distinctions that can be drawn between man and man; and harsh, exaggerated, because overlooking all the gradations of character to be found both among the evil and the good; and it can scarcely fail to injure alike the believer and the unbeliever—on the believer tending to produce despair, and on the unbeliever tending to produce contempt. Such vague, overdrawn descriptions, I say, are apt to make the pious conclude that they are not in any sense or measure Christians, and thus to cause the Gospel do what it was never meant to do, "break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax;" while on the worldly they have naturally a contrary effect, leading them in their hearts to say, 'Things are not so; your saints and sinners are equally fictions of the mind, which have no existence in nature; we confess we are not the saints, but neither are we the sinners

you describe—we are quite as much your saints as your sinners—and that may, perhaps, suffice;' and thus they are helped to pursue, with quieted consciences, the fatal path of indifference and self-satisfaction.

But, secondly, we must never ignore the twofold division of men into good and evil as fundamental—as underlying all other grounds of division and distinction. There are varieties of the evil and degrees of the good, but that of itself implies that the two great classes are the evil and the good—those in whom the word received is barren, and those in whom it is fruitful. It requires often a far deeper and keener glance than the human eye is capable of to discern between the good and the evil, the genuine and the counterfeit; but the Divine eye sees at the bottom of each heart, at the centre of each soul, what makes a real and vast difference. There may be worldly men who, from natural excellence of disposition, advantages of education, or other causes, can fairly challenge comparison, in regard to all the outward proprieties and virtues of conduct, with the general body of true believers; but there will be an essential difference notwithstanding—a difference in principle, motive, aim. The root of a man's life is either faith or sense; its governing affection is either

love to God or worldly desire; its chief end is either the glory of God or self-gratification; its standard is either the invisible and eternal or the seen and temporary; and I know not how the word of God, which everywhere recognises this distinction, can be applied with efficacy where it is forgotten or rejected.*

As the sower sowed it came to pass that some seed fell "by the wayside,"—on the edge of the road, on the narrow strip of land which was the margin alike of the cultivated field and the beaten path. There the seed could find no entrance into the soil beneath, and so it lay exposed on the surface, and was soon either crushed by the foot of the passenger or devoured by the birds of the air. It was wholly

* If these remarks are correct, the following statement of one of the most sagacious and honest of men, the late Archbishop of Dublin, must be very defective and objectionable:—"I have seen in a religious work (and one may often hear the like) a distinct assertion that there are in the world two, and *only two*, sorts of persons, the 'converted' and the 'unconverted.' Now this may, no doubt, be explained in a certain sense in which it would be true, and in which it would not be dangerous; and some such sense, doubtless, was what the author intended; but in the most simple and obvious and natural sense it is a plain contradiction of our Lord's teaching. The one says that there are only *two* kinds of persons in the world; the other teaches us that there are at least *four*. I say 'at least,' because our Lord does not here profess to enumerate all the possible varieties of *un*profitable hearers; but He does tell us of *three* distinct kinds besides those who receive the word with profit; and, moreover, even of these last He describes several kinds, when He tells us that of the seed in good ground some brought forth thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold."—*Lectures on some of the Scripture Parables*, pp. 19, 20.

wasted, for it could not so much even as take root. It was good in itself, and had an inherent principle of life, an inexhaustible productiveness, but the ground on which it had fallen was so hard that it could sink into no place whence its vital, self-multiplying energies might manifest themselves. This soil which is altogether impenetrable by the seed corresponds, admirably corresponds, to the class of persons who are altogether unsusceptible to the word, who hear it but understand it not. The saving truths of the Gospel, so far from finding a lodgment among their affections, are not even rightly realised by their intellects. The word of the kingdom—the word which makes known Jehovah Jesus the true Head, Lord, and Leader of our race, and through which alone can the reign of righteousness and grace be established and extended on the earth—produces no impression for good on them, reaches not their hearts, is never livingly apprehended by their reasons, and soon disappears even from their memories.

The distinctive feature in the characters of those who belong to this first class of unprofitable hearers is, that they do not *understand* what they hear. This feature is found in every individual of the class, but it is more visible and prominent in some

than in others. There are some, for instance, who do not "understand" even in the lowest sense of that word. It is no very rare thing to find among those whose early education has been neglected, and whose powers from youth onwards have been exclusively occupied with severe, unremitting, bodily toils and personal or domestic wants, that, notwithstanding their regular routine of attendance on religious ordinances, they are wholly devoid of religious knowledge. They have not merely never seen the divine truth and beauty, never felt the divine power and virtue of the Gospel, but are altogether ignorant even about the outward life of the Redeemer of the world. They have contrived to come to church Sabbath after Sabbath for years and years, and yet to continue unacquainted with what Christ said, suffered, or did. I know not that the world presents a sadder spectacle than such men or women. Try to give them a notion of what the Gospel is—of their own relationship as sinners to God—of Christ's work on their behalf—of the privileges and duties of Christians—and you will speedily find yourself brought to a stand, all your resources and contrivances powerless against their stupidity and apathy, and the very faculty of thinking about aught beyond the lowest concerns of this earthly life so numbed and deaden-

ed that God alone, by a miracle of grace, can restore it. Eyes have they, but so blinded as to be unable to see even when the light shines in all its brightness; and hearts have they, but so gross and heavy as to be unable to understand even when the truth is simplest.

The word heard, however, is in most cases not understood, not because absolutely unknown, but because unrealised. It is known after a sort; its various declarations can be talked of, argued about, orderly arranged, appropriately quoted, while yet they are not perceived to be what they really are —are not recognised to be so closely and awfully related to those who hear them as they really are —are not accepted as a revelation of God to man. They are known in a dead, speculative, barren way; but there is no true, clear, living insight into their nature and meaning. Wherever the Gospel is beheld as it is—divinely true, divinely good, divinely beautiful—the heart cannot fail to leap up towards it with joy, nor the whole life to be attracted, swayed, and regulated by its divine and blessed influences. It is only by being not understood that it can be rejected. Examine the various assaults which have been made on our most holy faith, on the claims of Jesus, and you will find them, without exception, to

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rest on ignorance, on misconception. The feeling which is most strongly raised in a Christian heart, by an examination of these assaults, regarding their authors, is one which has its most natural expression in Christ's own words on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is some slight comfort to perceive this, even although the ignorance, the misconceptions may be traced, as is undoubtedly the case, to moral perversities. If there were a man who beheld in Christ's person the express image of the Father, the brightness of His glory, and in Christ's work the power and wisdom of God to the salvation of the soul—if there were a man thus illumined as to his intellect while his heart retained its perversity, so that, standing face to face, eye to eye, with perfect truth, divine grace, eternal life, he could yet disown and discard them, he must needs be an object of unmitigated horror. Thus, with full consciousness to choose evil for good, with clear insight into Christ's work to treat it as if it were the devil's work, seems, in fact, to be that stage of uttermost guilt—the sin against the Holy Ghost—beyond which there is no hope, for the forgiveness of which it is impossible to pray. But whether this be so or not, it is obvious that, in most cases where the word has little practical efficacy, it

is owing to its being, although heard, not understood, in the sense of not realised. Its utterances are not denied to be true, but there is no adequate recognition of their truth; they are accepted in form and letter, but not in substance and spirit—not with a clear, close, living apprehension of the authority, the holiness, the goodness, of God contained in them.

What is the consequence? Why, that what is so heard is soon forgotten. The seed which lies exposed on the surface of a soil which it cannot penetrate, which lies on a wayside frequented by passengers, must be trodden down, crushed, destroyed. The Gospel, in other words, when superficially received —when its glorious tidings of exceeding joy, and its awful threats of unutterable woe, are listened to with indifference—cannot keep its ground against the trespasses and sins, the fleshly lusts and desires, which abound in our hearts. They tread it down, bury it in forgetfulness, so that soon after it has been heard not only no sign of its power, but no trace even of its presence, is to be found. It disappears all the more rapidly from these wayside hearts because there is one ever on the alert to snatch it away. The prince of darkness, the dread power of evil—he who is continually watching for our destruction, tempting us to sin, and labouring

to bring to nought whatever might be for our good —is busied in making us forget entirely what we at any time hear of divine counsel, lest any single grain of saving truth should find some crevice in our worn and hardened natures to sink into, germinate, and bear. He knows what the purpose of the word is; that as surely as he himself seeks our ruin, does God seek our welfare; that every word of God has been spoken solely for our eternal good. He knows what the power of the word is; that feeble as it seems there is omnipotence in it; that it has foiled and defeated him and rescued his victims from his grasp times without number; that those who believe it are for ever delivered from his sway and tyranny. Therefore, aware of its purpose and power, he, the malignant enemy of God and man, seeking to defeat the design of God, and to prevent the salvation of man, strives, by manifold subtleties and artifices, by crowds of evil thoughts and desires, to carry off its truths swiftly and surely, as the keen-eyed and voracious fowls of the air devour the particles of grain which, scattered by the husbandman, fall not on the new-ploughed field, but on the smooth surface of some hard-trodden track.

That is the policy of Satan to secure our ruin, and

it shows us what ours ought to be to secure our salvation. It must be to receive the word of the kingdom into our hearts with the earnestness which its importance demands, to attend with every faculty of mind in full activity to the plan which God the Father has devised, which God the Son has executed, which God the Holy Ghost applies, for the establishment of the reign of righteousness, grace, and glory. If we do, Satan will not succeed. He cannot, however hard our hearts be, succeed, unless we foolishly and sinfully consent to his success. He cannot, for there is one mightier than he as anxious to save as he is to ruin us. There is one willing to soften the hardest heart and to send down the refreshing waters of His Spirit even on the seed that falls by the wayside. Satan desires to snatch the seed away because he knows there is eternal life in it. God, on the other hand, has sent it to us for no other reason than that we might have eternal life. Let us therefore feel this as we ought to do, that God's word has been sent for our salvation—that to receive it is eternal life and joy, and to neglect it eternal death and misery; let us welcome every word of God we hear, and strive to keep them; let us ask God to keep His own words in our hearts, to drive away the enemy who would snatch them from

us, and to bless and prosper them by His good Spirit until they bring forth fruit abundantly; and, without a doubt, it will be done—it will be unto us even as we wish.

We have thus considered the fate of the seed which fell by the wayside. There was, we are next told, other seed which fell upon stony places, or, as Luke says, upon a rock. Over this rock there was a thin covering of mould, but no depth of earth. Here the seed sprang up at once, but the hard rock beneath prevented it from taking any proper root, and so it withered and died under the heat of the sun. Such soil is an admirable figure of a shallow and superficial nature—of a character without depth, steadiness, or seriousness. Now, in a nature of this description, conditions requisite for the productiveness of the divine word are wanting. Some will say no conditions are needed, the word must do all of itself, the work of grace is independent of any constitutional peculiarities and any results of education or experience. But the parable teaches plainly throughout that this is an error—that there are within the mind itself certain conditions favourable to the reception and fertility of the word, and others unfavourable. The old man, it is true, cannot by any spontaneous effort lay aside itself and put on the

new man. Natural character cannot be transformed by any power or labour of its own into spiritual character. The second birth can only be due to the incorruptible seed of the word. Every son of God must be one who has been "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It follows not, however, that the old and the new, the natural and the spiritual, are not in many and intimate ways related. And this is indeed the case. It is out of the old elements that the Spirit through the word begets the new being —out of the old materials that He builds up the new structure. The virtues of nature are much more in affinity with grace than the vices of nature. Everything in creation or providence which deepens and improves the character, which renders it more thoughtful, more earnest, more ready to deny self and restrain passion, more elevated in aim, prepares it for the better reception of the word of the kingdom. All lower and partial good tends towards the highest and perfect good. Let it not be objected that this is to take from God and give to man. God gives not the supreme good alone, but all lower good; not only the unsearchable riches of redemption, but even the least of those excellences of nature and advantages of discipline which prepare and dis-

pose the heart for a right reception of His word and grace. *Every* good gift is from above.

The seed which fell on rocky places sprang quickly up and withered quickly away. These are the two circumstances here to be considered. First, this seed sprang up at once. It did so because the soil was shallow and poor—a thin covering of light earth over a rock. If the soil had been richer and deeper, so as to permit the seed to cast down a firm root, the blade would not have been so speedily visible. As it was, whatever moisture and sustenance were in this soil all rushed up to produce an outward greenness and luxuriance. Thus is it with a class of the hearers of God's word of grace. The effect of the word upon them is immediate and manifest, because of the very levity and fickleness of their dispositions. Sudden conversions, with marked emotional results, often indicate a previous want of thoughtfulness and seriousness, which ought to moderate our anticipations as to the prosperity of the future. It holds good in the realm of grace as well as of nature, that a sure work is generally a slow one—that a foundation must be laid deep if the structure is either to rise high or stand firm. Every lesson of creation or providence as to God's character or man's duty which is rejected, makes

a right appropriation of redemption more difficult and less probable, while every such lesson received deepens and prepares the soil of human nature for it. But the more a man has been thus prepared—the more he has learned from the ordinary discipline of God—the less likely is it that there will occur in his history that sudden and conspicuous outburst of quick emotions and lively feelings as to spiritual things which some most injudiciously regard as in itself the highest triumph of the Gospel, and the great end of the Christian ministry. The aim of the Gospel is not to make converts, at least not to make converts of this or that conventional type, but to present men perfect in Christ Jesus, endowed with all spiritual gifts and graces, whether pertaining to the understanding, affections, or will; and the ministry of the Gospel most adapted to make converts —most adapted to impress the shallow sensibilities of the trivial, and to raise rapidly up a delusive resemblance of spiritual life, yea, of proficiency in the spiritual life—may be far from a wise or truly efficient one. For all is not success which seems so. There may be many converts, and yet not one good soldier of Jesus Christ; many in whose lives there has been a sudden and marked spiritual crisis, the source of hitherto unfelt affections, of great joy and

gladness, and yet not one whose religion is genuine, so that it passeth through affliction as gold through the fire.

This brings us to the second distinctive feature of stony-ground hearers. They endure only for a while. They receive the truth eagerly, but yield as soon to the reaction of worldly temptations as they had before yielded to the divine word. All the religious impressions which they experience affect only the surface of their characters, not the underground, which remains as it was, a rock—the old, hard, worldly, sinful nature, only covered over and concealed for a time by a sort of piety which consists in emotions, impulses, feelings, not in fixed principles, not in a new life. Therefore, when tribulations and persecutions come because of the word, they lose the lively faith in it which they seemed at first to possess, and their love to it dies out, yea, settles into aversion; they are offended, and fall away. Tribulations and persecutions are what they did not count on; the gladness with which they heard the word was due to overlooking their existence. It is as an easy religion, as a religion all pleasure and joy, that they embrace the Gospel; and when it turns out, as it is sure very soon to do, that it is by no means so—that self-sacrifice is its first and great

law—that there is not only a cross to be believed in but a cross to be carried, a cross often heavy and painful, crucifying the body for the profit of the soul—then they abandon and renounce it. Alas for their feebleness and fickleness! Blessed is he who shall not be thus offended in Christ. The crown can be won only by the endurance of the cross—endurance unto the end—endurance, like our Lord's own, even unto death.

Tribulations and persecutions must come; they are appointed for good and necessary ends. As the sun, even in its intensest heat, is beneficial to the plant which is firmly rooted in a good soil—as it only makes such a plant grow the more vigorously and ripen the more rapidly—so afflictions the severest further the progress, strengthen and mature the faith, of a true Christian; and as it is, therefore, not to the heat of the sun but the thinness of the soil that we must attribute the eventual want of prosperity which befell the seed on stony places, so it is not to the severity of their afflictions, but the levity and inconstancy of their hearts, that we must assign the final decay and loss of piety in those in whom its early promise was so abundant. But where the evil is thus a light soil, a thoughtless nature, what remedy can there be? Is there a remedy? Oh yes;

for every evil there is a remedy. God's resources are marvellous, infinite. He can deepen and sober our nature, and prepare it for the right reception of His word. Yea, the words of God will work out for themselves in time a fitting soil even in the shallowest nature, if wilful perversity prevent them not. God is ever, and in all things, trying to teach us. The heavens declare His glory, and here below, on earth, day unto day and night unto night showeth forth knowledge concerning Him. "The Spirit of the Lord filleth the world," and so even the smallest and meanest things in the world have beautiful truths to tell us about Him. Good and evil, joy and sorrow, preach to us. Gifts call upon us to be grateful, and bereavements to be resigned. All events warn us to exercise faith and obedience. There is not a vice but countless examples tell us of the evil of it, nor a virtue but countless examples tell of the good of it; not a moment of time in which there is not some monition of eternity, nor a point of creation in which there is not some reference to the Creator. If, in a world so full of divine instruction, our natures are not sober and serious enough to appropriate aright the great word, Believe and live, wilful perversity alone, I say, can account for it; and we have only to lay aside that perversity and listen to

these manifold words of God, and they will create a soil fit for producing the fruits of righteousness and peace, as the plants of the earth, by their growth and decay, gradually create a soil fit for bringing to perfection the seed of the husbandman. Pray without ceasing, then, I beseech you, that God, through the teachings of creation, the discipline of providence, the disclosures of Scripture, and the influences of the Spirit, would prepare your minds and hearts to receive with faith, and to hold fast in patience, His salvation, the fruit of which is holiness, and the end of which is everlasting life.

A third portion of the seed sown was wasted because it fell among thorns—fell where were the seeds and roots of thorns. It there sprang up and gave promise of fruit, but the thorns grew also, and as they were native to the soil, and most in affinity with it, they proved the stronger, and "choked" the good grain, and reduced it to barrenness. The fault of the soil in this case was its being filled with these noxious seeds and roots; otherwise it was perfectly suitable to bear corn, wheat, and suchlike precious fruits of the earth. But this fault proved fatal. When the thorns and good grain were left to contend together, the thorns, which were the spontaneous produce of the ground, prevailed over the seed, which

was merely sown into it. That the seed might prosper the thorns must have been repressed and rooted out. So is it with the soil of the human heart. The cares and pleasures of the world are natural to it, whereas the principles and affections of true religion are not. Piety grows on earth only as a heavenly flower transplanted into an uncongenial soil under an inclement sky. It needs to be carefully protected and assiduously cultivated.

There are many who fancy that if the good seed be once sown in their hearts it will of itself make them good; that if they have once felt strongly right religious impressions—if they have once been affected with a lively sense of the mercy of God in Christ—if they have once felt themselves converted and the children of God—they are safe, and have no more need for anxious concern about their souls. There are many who fancy that, from the very commencement of a Christian course, a man may, simply from receiving the word, and being affected by it in a peculiar way, have full assurance of final salvation. Some go even farther than that, and hold that those who have not this assurance are not children of God. Some go still farther than that, and hold not only that every one who is a child of God has got this assurance, but even that every one

who has got this assurance is a child of God. Now, if all these persons are not thoroughly mistaken, the part of this parable which is at present under our consideration must be thoroughly false.

It is not enough, we here learn, to begin well. The word may be sown in the heart, may be received, may be attended with peace and joy, and yet if we think that because it has thus far sprung up within us, we may relax our efforts, may cease to tend and cherish it, we grievously err. The strongest and most salutary impressions which the Gospel can make upon the heart will be gradually weakened and effaced, and finally overgrown and destroyed, unless there is constant exertion put forth in rooting out those desires and propensities which war against the truth. For the tendencies of our nature and the influences of the world are not towards the growth and perfection of what is good, but towards its hindrance and destruction. We have only to fold our hands and let things take their own course, to neglect to watch against neglect, to leave nature to itself, and the richest promise of piety will soon be brought to nought, and our souls will appear barren of all good and overgrown with all evil. The thorns will choke and displace the good grain.

These thorns are either the care of this world or

the deceitfulness of riches—either the anxieties or the pleasures of life. It would be hard to say which is most destructive. The poor man's toil for the merest necessaries of life, his struggle for a scanty and uncertain daily subsistence for himself and family, is apt to prevent the thriving of the spiritual word in his heart; and the allurements which surround the wealthy, and the desires and ambitions which they suggest, often prove as prejudicial as fatal. The world has a dark side and a bright—one which acts on our fears and another which acts on our desires; and by both it draws the heart away from God, and from obedience to the word of His grace, with a power which is irresistible to unaided human nature. Yet it is not necessary that we should yield. If we consent to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," this high and legitimate care will deliver us from all lower and illegitimate cares; if we drink deeply of "the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore," we shall turn away with contempt from all the impure pleasures of earth. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The revelation of God in Christ, and the light, life, and liberty therein, this priceless treasure, known, realised, possessed, can alone free us from the manifold

cares and allurements engendered by the flesh and the world under the subtle ministry of Satan, and the possession of this treasure God has promised to faith and prayer; and what He has promised He will perform, for He is not a man that He should lie.

The whole seed, however, is not lost. It would be very sad if it were; very disheartening work to sow if it were. That what is so precious as the good seed, God's words of grace and salvation, can be wasted at all, is a strange fact; that it is wasted to such an extent as this parable suggests, and as experience proves, is a most awful fact. But, blessed be God! a part of it falls where it prospers. It falls on what is said to be good soil, and this good soil is explained to represent "an honest and good heart." What is meant by this? What is meant by speaking of an honest and good heart before the word of grace has fallen upon it, and been received into it, and has by its effectual working renewed it? What is meant by speaking as if the word here found the heart good instead of making it good?

These questions I have virtually answered at an earlier stage of this exposition. Creation and Providence tend to redemption under the direction and government of God's Holy Spirit, and those who

yield to the Spirit in these lower spheres, by a right use of God's creatures and God's dispensations, are thereby prepared and disposed to yield to Him in the higher sphere of saving grace. The entire history of the world before the incarnation of our Lord was a preparation for His coming; and the entire history of every soul until the hour of its regeneration is a similar preparation for a right reception of the incorruptible seed. If a man resist not this preparation there is a consequent deepening and enriching of the soil of his heart, so that the truth as it is in Jesus will find an easier entrance and take a firmer hold therein. This state of preparedness is the honesty and goodness of the natural heart, and it is itself a state wrought by the Spirit of God. This good soil is as much from God as the good seed or the good produce; and whatever capacity of receiving and retaining the good seed and yielding the good produce it possesses is wholly from God. Farther into this matter we need not, ought not, cannot go. Difficulties may be started as to how it can be —perplexing questions without number may be put as to the relation of God's grace and man's will; but these difficulties we are not called upon to remove, these questions we are not called upon to answer; nay, to attempt to do so could serve only to darken

instead of explaining the passage before us, which is expressed in those plain and general words of popular language which, whatsoever theories they may be supposed to be consistent with, cannot be admitted authoritatively to teach any theory.

We are briefly but very comprehensively told how these honest and good hearts act towards the word. They *hear* it; they come within its reach and influence. They are not of the number of those who consider the hearing of it painful and grievous; who fancy they cannot hear too little of it. And what they hear they *understand*. They really appropriate it; take it home to their hearts as what they need; experience its vital and motive power. They have their eyes opened to behold wondrous and precious things in it. They see the spiritual objects which it reveals in a light peculiar to them as the children of grace. For "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, gives unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to themward who believe."

But the fact which is most distinctive of this class

of hearers is that they do actually bring forth fruit. They not merely promise well, but perform well. The word sown in them not only springs up, but matures, ripens, fructifies. The grace of God conveyed by it teaches them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. It is for this end God has provided seed and sent forth sowers. It is only by the production of fruit that we can glorify Him. The test and triumph of Christian faith is Christian life. If, notwithstanding the word of doctrine, we remain ignorant —notwithstanding the word of terror remain unawakened — notwithstanding reproof remain hardened—notwithstanding exhortation remain obstinate; if, notwithstanding the quickening and sanctifying influence of the word, we remain dead and unholy—notwithstanding its tendency to promote everything that is true, pure, honest, lovely, virtuous, and of good report, continue carnal and profane;—if this be so, what faith we may have in the word is dead and unavailing, and what feelings we may have about it are delusive; true Christian principle is not in us: we are branches *on* Christ by profession, but not *in* Christ by vital union; barren and useless branches, the end of which is to be lopped off, cast into the fire, and burned.

The seed which fell on good ground all prospered, yet it did not all prosper equally. It brought forth in some cases thirty, in some sixty, in some an hundred fold. The Gospel received is never unproductive of good, but its results vary in different persons according to their respective powers, relations of life, spheres of usefulness, and, above all, according to their zeal and diligence. No effort after Christian excellence passes unnoticed or unrewarded. He who sows sparingly reaps sparingly, and he who sows plenteously reaps plenteously. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead."

SERMON V.

THE TARES.

MATTHEW xiii. 24-30, and 36-43.

THE parable of the sower is designed to teach what results are produced by the word of God's grace on persons of different dispositions. It represents to us that word as rejected altogether by the indifferent and hardened, as readily received by the fickle and excitable, but no less readily abandoned, and as gradually overcome in the self-seeking and worldly by the cares and pleasures of this life, while it takes permanent root and brings forth its proper fruits only when apprehended by honest and good hearts. This is not a pleasant picture. Our Lord, you would be almost inclined to say, could not have set a more gloomy prospect before the minds of His disciples. In three classes of persons out of four, the word of the kingdom, the word of salvation, is figured as failing of its end, as not prospering in

that whereunto it was sent. Our Lord does not proceed, however, in the parable before us, to dispel or lessen, but to confirm and deepen, the gloom. He goes on to show that where the word does take root, springs up and ripens, there is not, as might be anticipated, a return of absolute good, a harvest of pure wheat—but that, on the contrary, Satan somehow contrives to mar and corrupt where he finds that he cannot entirely destroy, mingling evil with the good, by sowing tares among the wheat.

Now, there is one reflection which, I think, cannot fail here to suggest itself. It is, that no enthusiast would ever have taken so calm and unexaggerated a view of the reception his doctrine would meet with. We can perceive in these two parables that Christ formed a most correct and dispassionate estimate of human nature, that He clearly foresaw how men would deal with the Gospel He brought them, that many would reject it, that many would fall away from it after receiving it, that many would walk unworthy of it, and that many who went by His name would be hypocrites. It is obvious that He anticipated the whole history of His church without illusion of any kind. Is it possible that any mere man *could* have done so with such accu-

racy? Is it conceivable, above all, that any enthusiast *would* have done so?

There have been numerous instances of persons who fancied that they had invented some system which would revolutionise society, which would afford a new and better basis to life, but it has always been found that one of the symptoms of the enthusiasm which gives rise to such exaggerated hopes is a blind faith in human nature as vastly better than it is, a most foolish but firm faith that if men are only shown what is true and good and fitted to promote their interests, they will certainly and speedily adopt it. It is obvious from the parable of the sower and this parable of the tares, that Christ was perfectly free from all illusion of the sort. He knew what was in man, and what to expect from him.

And what He knew He did not conceal. He as plainly foretold as He clearly foresaw the disastrous fate His holy word would often meet. This renders the purity of His intentions as apparent as the calm comprehensiveness of His judgment. An enthusiast would not have seen the truth, and an impostor would not have dared to express it. If Jesus had been conscious of deceit, whatever suspicions He might have entertained as to the success

of His designs, He would have kept in His own breast, lest He should dishearten His adherents. But having no deceit, He had no concealment. He disclosed the whole truth—its dark side as well as its bright. He dwelt on the impediments, difficulties, trials, and failures of faith, with a fulness, frequency, and emphasis, which proved that He was not only free from all illusion Himself as to the progress of His cause, but most anxious that His disciples should be so likewise.

The aim of this parable is to explain a familiar but painful fact, and to teach us how to deal with it. The fact is this: Within the outward or visible limits of the kingdom of God there are many who are not truly of it; many who bear the name while they have not the nature of Christian disciples; many who pass for children of the light while children of the darkness. This perplexing fact is permanent. Adam's own household, wherein were Cain and Abel, exemplified it, and not till the harvest, "which is the end of the world," will it be got rid of, and evil be gathered to evil, and good gathered to good, and evil and good for ever separated from each other.

Consider only that special dispensation of the kingdom known as the Christian dispensation

among the twelve who formed our Lord's personal and constant attendants there was one who was of the Adversary. Even among that small and select handful of wheat Satan contrived to drop one tare-seed.

There are persons who conceive of the church of apostolic times as an example of all that the church ought to be—as pure and holy, as almost without spot or wrinkle, as being to the history of Christianity what the garden of Eden is to the history of humanity. But this notion any man who has got a New Testament, and prefers its instructions to his own fancies, must be aware is mere romance. Ananias and Sapphira belonged to the apostolic church. The Galatian and Corinthian churches were apostolic. The distinctions of rich and poor in God's own house now cannot be more marked than those which aroused the indignation of St James. The heretics who vex the churches at present are perhaps not so extravagant in their speculations, and are certainly not so immoral in their conduct, as the "filthy dreamers" whom St Peter and St Jude denounce. The churches of Asia described by St John can [redacted]arcely be contended to have been models for our [redacted]tion. It would have been strange if it had [redacted]erwise. Communities of converts from hea-

thenism cannot be so sound in doctrine or so pure in practice as communities which have enjoyed for generations the blessings of truth and grace. No person of sober judgment would deem that a church formed of Chinese or Hindoo converts might be left safely to their own guidance, even although they had embraced the Gospel with fervour, and with the danger of persecution before them. Now the apostolic churches were simply communities of converts from heathenism, and the apostolic Epistles show us that they had the faults as well as the virtues which such communities are wont to have. Along with their simple faith and their fervour of first love there were a sad lack of self-government, extravagance, strifes, and a proneness to fall back into excesses of pagan licentiousness.

Every subsequent period has presented to us the same mingling of hypocrites and believers. It has seemed at times as if Gospel light would be entirely extinguished; the wheat has been as if lost among the tares. There were in the middle ages some dreadful centuries; those who professed to be the spiritual guides of men setting before them the mo[illegible] depraved examples, and turning the church of [illegible] into a den of thieves; the darkest superstitio[illegible] ing over society, and the vilest corruptio[illegible]

within it, and the superstition and corruption being identified with the holy Gospel; while those who struggled for truth and cleaved to righteousness were few and isolated and feeble. The Protestant churches have never sunk so deep in degradation, but again and again there have passed over every Protestant community cold and wintry blasts, which have frozen, as it were, their life in its very sources, so that no warmth, no verdure remained, so that scarce a leaf or bud of promise appeared.

It is this fact of the mixture of true disciples and false which the parable we have now to consider deals with. The Son of Man is in possession of a field; this field is the world. The world—the whole world—is the sowing-ground of the Son of Man. It is where He scatters His seed, and where His wheat must grow until garnered in heavenly barns. It is the local habitation of His kingdom. "The field is the world"—*is*, and not merely *will be*. In these simple words, it is true, a great prophecy lies involved. The field is not merely Judea or Palestine, but "the world," and no narrower term would have been sufficient for our Lord's purpose, since the Gospel has been sent as glad tidings of great joy to the whole race of Adam; not as the exclusive property of some favoured people or class, but for the

healing of all nations. But there are fact and history in the words, no less than anticipation and prophecy. The kingdom of heaven is not merely to be thought of as diffusive in its nature, and destined to be universal in its sway, as seed scattered over all lands and bringing forth fruit in all lands, until the whole earth shall be covered with the harvest of the Lord, white and ripe, and ready to be cut down by the sickles of the angels, and gathered into the garners above; but as having roots which reach back to the remotest past, and extend to the utmost limits of space. From the first day of creation, over the whole earth, Christ has been present among men both with His truth and Spirit, as "the True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and the dispensation which specially bears His name, the dispensation under which we now live, is only the highest form of a kingdom which in its rudimental state has embraced, I believe, all heathen peoples, and has passed through the patriarchal, legal, and prophetic stages to that of "these last days." The parables we have to consider are true of the kingdom in its widest sense, and if I confine my interpretation of them to the Christian dispensation, it is only for the sake of practical utility, and because in the Christian dispensation the kingdom

assumes its final, absolute, and perfect form. But in strict and literal truth "the field is the world."

The Son of Man, then, has a field. It is not said in our parable that He has prepared it for the reception of the seed He has resolved to sow it with, but we know that He has. If there be one fact in history clearer than another, it is that Providence is made the minister of grace; that God prepares the way for the spread of His Son's cause; that He does not govern the world so as to show neglect and disregard of Christianity, but for its sake, and so as to show that it is the grand end of His eternal purposes of wisdom and love. Christ, then, has a field. It was once a barren waste; it was once covered only with weeds and briars. But He has broken it up; ploughed and harrowed it well; prepared it with incessant diligence for many a long year. It has never been out of His view. The floods have gone over it; the frosts have bound it in ice; the heat of scorching summer suns has baked and burnt it. But flood and frost and summer's heat have all been serving a purpose. They have been fitting the field for the coming seed-time, for the season of actual visible tillage. Now it has come, and the Son of Man scatters "good seed" in His field.

"The good seed are the children of the kingdom."

The parable before us differs, you will observe, from the parable of the sower, as to "the good seed." Just as the ground or soil there represents the human heart, and here the world, so the good seed there represents the word of God, and here true believers. The scope of the parable of the sower is to illustrate how the message of salvation through Christ influences persons of various dispositions; the scope of the parable before us is to warn us to suffer with patience the coexistence of false and sincere disciples to be found in every age, and not to endeavour to obtain purity by violent and dangerous measures. This circumstance, that here persons and not doctrines are spoken of, is important to be borne in mind. It has frequently been forgotten, and the parable expounded as if its great theme were the origin of heresies, and the mode in which they should be treated, whereas it is quite evidently about good Christians, and about hypocrites. Those who are represented by the wheat may not be free from most erroneous religious opinions; those who are represented by the tares may have most sound and scriptural views. A man may be himself a good seed, in the sense in which the word is used here, although Satan may have cast

many a seed of falsehood into his mind; and a man may be an evil seed, a tare seed, himself, and yet many a good seed of the word may have found more or less of entrance into his heart.

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." It was not essential in the previous parable that the sower should be defined, and our Lord's own exposition took no notice of the sower, but it is otherwise in the present parable. Here it is essential that, as the tares are traced up to the agency of Satan, the wheat should be traced to that of the Son of Man. The children of the kingdom have all been sown by Him. By His word, and through the effectual working of His Spirit, they have been created to good works. He has sown them as good seed with a bounteous hand in a field, which has been redeemed from waste by many labours, and which may fairly be expected to yield a rich harvest of good wheat. At first it promises well. It is covered with green blades and rising stalks. Its owner's servants look upon it, and joyous expectations fill their hearts. But time passes on, and as the servants look upon it again they behold what surprises and grieves them. The pure and good seed sown by their master has not produced a crop of pure and good wheat. The wheat is mingled with tares.

It is, as you will observe, tares, not thorns nor thistles, nor other manifest weeds, which are said to have grown up along with the wheat. Tares are very like wheat. When the two are not fully developed, a close scrutiny will often fail to detect any difference between them. There is so much resemblance that tares have been supposed to be originally identical with wheat. It is said to be a current opinion among the peasantry in Palestine, that wheat changes in very wet seasons into tares. Such a notion is, of course, entirely erroneous, and arises only from the great outward resemblance of tares to wheat. While tares, however, are thus, to outward appearance, like wheat, they are in real character very different. They not only destroy the strength of the soil on which they grow, they not only contribute nothing to the profit of its owner, they are actually poisonous to man and beast. They need to be carefully winnowed out of the wheat before it is ground, or the flour will be unwholesome, and the bread composed of it will cause giddiness and sickness. How like religious hypocrites! How like all false disciples! They may be to the eye of man, which can behold only the outward appearance, scarcely, if at all, distinguishable from those who are worthy followers of the

Lamb, but to the eye of God, which looketh upon the heart, oh! how different they are! Their inner life, if life it can be called, comes from a source the most opposite, is of a nature the most opposite, and tends to an end the most opposite. Its source is the principle and parent of evil—its nature is carnal and selfish—its end is death and woe eternal. To a hasty glance or a brief inspection they may seem children of the kingdom, but they are of their father the devil, and his works they do, and his wages they will receive.

The inherent difference of the wheat and tares became manifest at last. When they had so far sprung up that the fruits of both were to be seen, when there was not mere stalk and blade, but ears of grain as well, then they were perceived to be what they really were. By their fruits they were known. And there is no other way of knowing men. It is not by profession, but by practice—not by promise, but by performance—that the genuine believer can be distinguished from the hypocrite.

The tares no less than the wheat must by necessity of nature manifest what is in them. As good can bring forth good only, so evil can bring forth evil only. It has its own laws of growth, which are interesting but painful to trace, either in the indivi-

dual or in society. Robespierre, whose name is so inseparably associated with the monstrous horrors of the Reign of Terror in France, appears to have had originally a sincere and even sensitive aversion to cruelty, and there can be no doubt that he was one of the most consistent and sternly honest of men in his political conduct. It was with a true instinct that the mobs of Paris called him "the incorruptible." From the first, however, he carried within his heart evil qualities, of which his revolting enormities were only the final and legitimate results. The good in him was not changed into evil, but the evil in him grew worse and worse, and by its rank and noxious luxuriance choked and overcame the good.

So those who have studied the history of the Papacy cannot but have been struck with amazement at the consistency and order of its whole growth; first the blade, then the stalk, then the full grain in the ear; first a mere thought or tendency, then occasional practice, then a theory, then a thoroughly organised system—theoretical and practical—bending all things to its own purposes, and ruling with despotic sway over millions of human beings. Who could have foreseen in the seedling, planted by truly pious hands, that mighty upas-tree which now drops from its outspread boughs the poison of death over so

many nations? No eye, certainly, but that of Omniscient God, could have foreseen it, and yet the giant tree is but the full natural outcome of the little seedling.

It was when the good and the evil, the wheat and tares, had both sprung up, and the nature of each was manifest, that the servants in utter amazement came to their Lord, the Master of the field, and anxiously asked Him, "Lord, didst Thou not sow good seed in Thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" These questions show us in a very vivid manner the perplexity of the zealous servants. They knew good seed had been sown; but then what an inexplicable result was before their eyes in this sad mixture of wheat and tares! The reply of their Master traces the mischief up to its source. It originates, He tells them, with an enemy. He Himself had sown good seed, but the eyes of a powerful and crafty foe had been looking upon His work with malignant hatred. There is a mysterious agent in this world in whom all evil has its source, as in God all good; a mysterious person, whose whole nature is sin—who is sin incarnate—whose very personality is sin. The whole aim and energy of this being is to make evil triumphant in the universe. To mar all that is good—to pervert and destroy all that is good—such is his work.

As whatever is good has its source in God, so whatever is evil has its source in Satan. He does not, it is essential to remember, work some evil only, but all evil. He is not the source of some of the wickedness in the world, and man of the rest, but he is at the root of all the wickedness in the world, and is so by acting in and through the will of man. He effects evil, in fact, as the Holy Spirit effects good; that is, not independently of the human will, but by means of it. I make this remark, because, although it may seem commonplace, it is constantly ignored, and yet is of great practical utility. It is only on this view of the agency of Satan that we can trace his presence and operations. If we do some wicked actions under his influence, and other wicked actions of ourselves, there are certainly no marks by which we can distinguish between these two classes of wicked actions. Hence there is no middle point where we can consistently maintain a footing between holding that Satan is somehow the source of all evil, and denying his agency altogether. Author of all evil, or of none, is the alternative; and author he is of all evil, *through the will of man.* Wherever we establish the existence of evil, we establish also the presence of Satan. Evil is an effect of which Satan is in all cases the first cause. We may therefore

satisfy ourselves as to his agency or absence in any given circumstances by a legitimate process of inference, by good and sufficient induction.

But what is more common than for people to attribute things to the operation of Satan, the spirit of evil—and to the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of good, by mere guessing and dogmatism, apparently in perfect ignorance that there is any rational way of discovering the operation of either of these beings? Thus, during the late revival movement in this country many were found to assert broadly that it was due to Satan, and others that it was due to the Holy Spirit, when it was very obvious that most of those who made either of these serious and sweeping statements spoke at random, leaped to the conclusion that they wished to be true, and made their assertion about the first cause of the facts which they saw or heard of without an honest and patient examination of their secondary causes or of their consequences, through a knowledge of the character of which alone could the true first cause be ascertained. Before any man can be justified in connecting the name either of the Holy Spirit or of Satan with any extensive movement, he ought to have made a careful study of it, to have analysed it, separated its good from its evil elements, ascertained

the series of secondary causes at work, what effects have resulted from the pure power of the truth and the pure love of goodness; what from physical causes, sympathy, nervousness, &c.; and it is only after this has been accomplished—after the separation of the evil, both in secondary causes and in results, from the good, both in secondary causes and in results—that first causes can be spoken of aright, and God receive what is God's, Satan what is Satan's. It is wrong, in judging of events, to stop short at second causes, but it is wrong also to attempt to reach first causes apart from second causes,—by arbitrary dogmatism instead of rational inference. And rational inference as to first moral causes is, I repeat, possible only through this principle—*All* good is of God, and *all* evil is of Satan. Wherever good is, there God is; wherever evil is, there Satan is.

In the sowing of the Son of Man, Satan sees the ruin of his power—the ruin of that evil with which his sway is closely intertwined; and so he meets His work with a counter work full of craft and guile. Where the Son of Man has sown good seed he sows evil seed. He does it in darkness and secrecy, but at the fittest moment, which he is ever on the alert to seize. When men's eyes are closed, then he

scatters his tare-seed with lavish hand wherever it is likely to take root, and no sooner has he done so than he withdraws. He is of the darkness, and never comes into the light—never shows himself, never acts immediately. But while never visible himself, his works are visible and very numerous, for he is the father of all wicked men. "The tares are the children of the evil one." They have been born of his lies; have drunk into his spirit; have espoused his cause; do his will; and, alas! must share his doom.

No one who has studied the Bible with care can have failed to remark that the New Testament speaks much more clearly and fully about Satan than the Old Testament. To the saints of patriarchal and prophetic days only few and vague disclosures were made regarding his character and work. Some have seen in this an argument against the reality of a Divine revelation; they have deemed the gradual growth of the doctrine about Satan evidence of its merely natural or human origin. I see in it rather a proof of divinest wisdom and love. Revelation must in all its parts and doctrines be gradual. "As in education it is not a matter of indifference in what order the powers of a man are developed, as it cannot impart all to a man at once; so was God

also necessitated to maintain a certain order and a certain measure in His revelation."* And in this special instance there was a special reason why it should be so. God had greater mercy on man than to show him the terrible foe who longed and schemed for his ruin before He had shown him as clearly that he had a still mightier Friend. The full truth about Satan could not be revealed until the full truth about Christ was revealed. And you will perceive this parable furnishes us with the very truth which we need in order to bear the disclosure that we have such an enemy as Satan. It distinctly tells us that he is not our enemy only; that he is, above all, the enemy of the Son of Man; that it is, above all, against Him that his malignant feelings and endeavours are directed. Therefore let us have confidence and courage. If we have Satan against us we have Christ for us, and Christ is mightier than Satan. If we throw ourselves heartily into the service of Christ, relying on His help and grace, we shall neither have to recoil before the adversary, nor shall we fall a victim to his malice. Christ will shield us

* "Wie es der Erriehung nicht gleichgültig ist, in welcher Ordnung sie die Kräfte des Menschen entwickelt; wie sie dem Menschen nicht alles auf einmal beibringen kann; eben so hat auch Gott bei seiner Offenbarung eine gewisse Ordnung, ein gewisses Maasz halten müssen." —LESSING, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, § 5.

and fight for us. His power will be ours, and through His power ours will be the victory.

When the Master has made His explanation of the mischief, the servants, in the excess of their zeal, are impatient to begin at once to undo the work of the wicked one. They would instantly set about the plucking out of the tares. They ask, "Wilt Thou then that we go and gather them up?" It is a very natural question. There is a strong bias in us all to root out violently, to put down by authority, and not by reason, what we disapprove. It is hard to be tolerant. There is no lesson which it has taken men longer to learn. There is no lesson which they have learned more imperfectly.

The attainment of the comparative liberty of conscience now enjoyed in Protestant countries has demanded the most lengthened labours, and cost the severest sacrifices, and, after all, seems due rather to the pressure of circumstances, political expediency, and the nearly equally balanced strength of religious parties, than to the power of the truth, right reason, and good feeling. It is sometimes said that, Protestantism including the principles of toleration in its very nature, Protestants must be tolerant; and that, Roman Catholicism being essentially intolerant, Roman Catholics must be intolerant.

This is very plausible and—very false. It is perfectly true that the right of private judgment involves the duty of toleration, but it is as true that Protestants have had their eyes opened to see the connection between the right and the duty only in spite of themselves. Having been, in many respects most fortunately, from the first split up into a number of sects and parties, and having in front of them the powerful hostility of Rome, they were forced to be tolerant—forced to admit that, if men will judge for themselves, they will not all judge alike, and must bear with one another. Not unto us, not unto us, but unto God, in His holy providence, be praise for whatever toleration exists among us. We have assuredly not learned more than we could help. If we do not now burn or behead, banish or imprison, as our forefathers, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, thought they did God service by doing, many of us still do all we can or dare; we grieve and annoy, condemn and calumniate those whose views do not coincide with our own. It is not enough to secure our approbation and affection that a man love Christ and follow Him, but he must also join our sect or society, espouse its special interests, and hold up its partisan banner.

The answer of the Master to the question of His

servants is very decided. "Nay," He says, "lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them." It is necessary that we endeavour to receive these words in the same spirit of comprehensive charity from which they came, for great has been the ingenuity with which restrictions have been devised to deprive them of their significance and virtue, and to excuse the exercise of that intolerance which is so congenial to the depraved heart of man. It is, let us bear in mind, of the kingdom of God that this parable speaks—of the kingdom of God, and not of the Church. The question of toleration is not to be narrowed into a mere Church question. This has been a common artifice of those who wished to evade the teaching of our Lord. They have argued that by the over-zealous servants are to be understood only the officials or ministers of the Church—that the prohibition to root up tares applies only to them—that it lays no restriction on the authorities of the State—that, therefore, although the ministers of religion may not themselves inflict civil penalties for spiritual offences, they may call upon secular rulers to do so for them. There is, however, not the slightest warrant either here or elsewhere in God's Word for the distinction which is thus turned to so infamous a use. It is con-

cerning the kingdom of heaven that Christ speaks —that kingdom which ought to comprehend Church and State alike—of which the ecclesiastical and civil ought to be only two separate aspects, and with which, in actual fact, the Church is often as little identical as the State. The servants of this kingdom are all who seek to advance its interests; and all men ought to do so, and in every relation of life. The prohibition of our Lord applies to all His servants as such. They are not in that capacity in any sphere of life to seek to promote the progress of His cause, or to make for Him a pure kingdom by force, by penalties, by a violent rooting-up and casting-out of those who offend and do iniquity. What is forbidden is—all persecution for the sake of religion; all attempts to constrain and direct the spiritual life by outward authority. This is forbidden in every form, and forbidden to all.

It is forbidden in every form, whether by fire, the stake, and tortures, or fine, imprisonment, and civil disabilities, or even sneers, taunts, and opprobrious names. All these are alike unchristian in their principle. All are modes of force, and force is an illegitimate means of propagating the truth, and producing the faith, and promoting the love, in which the Gospel consists. The Gospel has no in-

tolerance save that which is inherent in the very nature of truth. Truth can only be rejected by a man at his peril. No man is morally free to believe a lie of any kind. All truth carries with it the right to be believed, and moral truth carries with it, in addition, the right to be obeyed. The Gospel as truth, moral and spiritual truth, highest truth, yea, the truth, does demand of us accordingly that we both believe and obey it—that we submit ourselves to it in mind, heart, and life. It holds us guilty if we do not. It warns us that either unbelief or disobedience is a most grievous sin, and will have most grievous consequences. If this be intolerance all truth is intolerant, all religions are intolerant, and none more so than our own, which says expressly—"He that believeth not shall be damned."

But this intolerance has nothing to do with coercion. Truth cannot be furthered by force. It must rest its claims to allegiance solely on evidence submitted to the scrutiny of reason and conscience; and if its evidence be rejected, however perversely, there is no help for that in compulsion, which can only add to what sin already exists the sin of hypocrisy. Persecution can never arise from zeal for the Gospel as truth, from zeal for the Gospel properly understood. If ever due to zeal in any measure, and not

to pride, selfishness, anger, ambition, and other hateful lusts which war against the soul, and set men at strife and war with one another, it must be to a zeal which is in alliance with error. If the kingdom of God be thought of as an outward society, outward connection with which is sufficient to secure salvation, only indifference to the salvation of souls would allow a man to abstain from the use of physical force, where moral force failed, to compel all whom he could to belong to this outward society or visible Church. Better that the body suffer, however severely, he would most consistently say, than that the soul be lost. And without a doubt we must give many persecutors credit for having acted under this combination of good and evil, true and false motives. Zeal for their religion, and erroneous views of its nature, have led them to inflict the most inhuman tortures on individuals, and to engage in the most desolating wars against communities.

But zeal *and* truth can lead to no such results. If the kingdom of God be thought of as a kingdom of truth—if to receive, love, and obey the truth as it is in Jesus be felt to be the only means of belonging to it, the utmost intensity of zeal cannot incline or tempt us to the use of force, since force can have no tendency to promote the interests of such a kingdom.

A constrained profession is worse than none. Salvation depends upon faith, but the faith which saves must be free. It must be a sincere expression of a man's spiritual life, an honest personal appropriation of the truth and grace of God needed to satisfy his religious wants. Evidence and persuasion alone can produce a faith which is real, active, living, and saving. He who sees not for himself spiritual truths in their own beauty and brightness, as with a living eye looking to the shining light, has not this faith. And what can the exercise of any outward authority do to produce it? Most assuredly nothing. It may check and destroy, but will never create or develop it. It must produce hyprocrisy where the creed prescribed is acquiesced in contrary to conviction, from the instinct of self-preservation or views of self-interest; and it must degrade and brutalise where the creed prescribed is acquiesced in blindly and irrationally; but in no case can it accomplish good.

Persecution for the sake of religion is forbidden to all. To limit the prohibition to the ministers of the Gospel is, as I have said, a device without warrant. The civil authorities are equally restricted. They have not only no right to use force in order to promote the growth and purity of the kingdom

of heaven, but they disobey a plain command of God if they attempt to do so. The magistrate may not wield the sword in matters of religion and conscience, except some question of justice between man and man be involved. It is but of yesterday, however, that men have generally recognised this great truth. Not only Roman Catholic divines, but the reformers, looked on it as a virtual denial of all good government, and equivalent to an assertion that all religious opinions are morally indifferent and socially insignificant. The famous Bishop Bossuet could say that, with the exception of Socinians and Anabaptists, all Protestants agreed with him in believing that the civil magistrate was bound to punish the enemies of sound doctrine. But men's thoughts have widened with the progress of the suns, and now what unbiassed thinker does not hold that no religious opinion may be dealt with by secular force? or does not now see that the fullest freedom, far from being dangerous to truth itself or the general interests of society, is most favourable to them?

"Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." History most fully proves that attempts to root out the tares have always been chargeable with plucking up the wheat.

Rome took to the task which Christ had forbidden, and we all know what a sad work she made of it, how she persisted until her garments were dripping with the blood of saints, and the more earnest and robust nations of Europe could endure her no longer. Lutherans, Calvinists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, have all tried it, but only to their own disgrace, the torture of God's children, and the dishonour of God's name. In all cases where churches have refused to be guided by Christ's direction, and have striven to obtain a purity which He Himself alone can bring about, they have torn up far more wheat than tares, and vexed and tormented the most sincere, the most honest and devoted of men.

Christ enjoins to let the tares remain where they are, lest the wheat be plucked up along with them. What shall we say, then, of those whose zeal for purity is so great that they pluck up and cast out the wheat, not only by mistake, but while acknowledging it to be wheat? This is a form of intolerance which Protestant communities have alone been so far left to themselves as to be guilty of. The Roman Catholic doctrine being that those who will not submit to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church are thereby tares—are thereby in a state of mortal sin, and out of the pale of salva-

tion—her excommunication is directed against those whom she defines and regards as tares. If she cast out wheat, that is at least not her intention. But many Protestant communities go much more glaringly against Christ's word, and cast out men for not approving of their sectarian peculiarities. These communities know perfectly well that a man may be in a state of grace, may be a true child of God, may be on his way to heaven, although he do not assent to their peculiar principles, yet they dare to reject him because he does not; dare to deny him church fellowship, or to expel him from it; dare to say as plainly as actions can do,—'Although we have been told not even to cast out tares lest we should cast out wheat along with them, yet shall we cast out what we ourselves acknowledge may be wheat, since it is not quite of the sort we wish it to be.' Churches may boast of the purity they thus obtain, and deem themselves holier than others because of it, but a purity which has been procured at the cost of such glaring defiance of Christ's word is dearly bought. Whenever a denomination ventures in its admiration of its denominational principle to make it a condition of church privileges, a term of church membership, it commits a sin against God so great, that no excellence in the

principle itself can counterbalance it. When it casts out those whom it yet admits may have a living interest in Christ, it does not unchurch them, but itself.

Let us not be afraid that evil will triumph for ever. It is only permitted to grow for a time. It has a purpose to serve in the Divine government, and therefore the strength of the Almighty is not put forth to crush it until that purpose is accomplished. In vain Canute the king said to the waves of the ocean swelling up high on our shores, "Thus far; no farther." The waves of ocean dashed around his feet, and compelled Canute the king, and his lying courtiers, to make swift their retreat. In vain shall mortal voice say to the advancing surges and towering billows of evil, dashing on and threatening to cover every spot of earth where truth and holiness hold a footing, "Thus far; no farther." But ocean has its bounds assigned it, and so has evil. The same hand has traced the outermost limits of both, beyond which they cannot pass. The sea obeys Him, and her tides ebb away. Evil itself shall obey Him, and ebb away from the earth for ever.

Men, as I have said, cannot separate the good from the evil, the wheat from the tares; but there are surer hands and clearer eyes than theirs to do

so. When the fulness of time is come, when the world is all a ripe harvest-field, the Son of Man will send His angels to reap it, and they will do what man cannot and may not do. They shall gather the tares into bundles; even out of the kingdom of their Lord all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. These are reserved for the burning. In the day of the wrath of God they shall be consumed with fire. Far otherwise shall it happen to the wheat. The angels, having thus separated from it all that is impure, shall gather it also together, bind it into sheaves, and treasure it up in the garners of the Lord. Then the saints shall be made manifest in glory to all the universe. They shall shine forth as the stars in the firmament; one being brighter indeed and more glorious than another, but all bright and glorious exceedingly. So may it be with us. May we shine on that day as stars in the firmament, as bright stars in the diadem of our Redeemer's glory!—Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE MUSTARD-SEED.

MATTHEW xiii. 31, 32.

THE first parable in this chapter sets before us a man going forth to sow—a man scattering around him the pure seed of God's holy and blessed word, and the various fates which that good seed meets with. It fails to bring forth fruit in three out of the four kinds of soil it falls upon; only on choice soil, on good ground, does it prosper and ripen. The next parable is still more discouraging. It informs us that where the Son of Man sows, Satan also sows; that where good seed, pure wheat, is scattered, evil seed, tare-seed, is likewise scattered, and grows up amidst the wheat, and cannot be rooted out without destruction to the wheat.

All history bears witness to the strict accuracy, the unexaggerated truthfulness of these two parables. It would be sad, however, if they contained

the whole truth, and they do not. The parable now before us and the one which follows direct our attention to another and a brighter aspect of the kingdom of God. They give the encouraging assurance that the seed out of which that kingdom grows, although it may to human eye appear feeble and despicable, has an imperishable life in it, a power of endurance and progress which will not fail to survive any treatment, to overcome all obstacles, and issue in a marvellous result; that the leaven which Christ has deposited in the world is so strong and effective that it will pervade and transform the entire mass, expel its natural evil, and fill it with supernatural good.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed,—which indeed is the least of all seeds." It is no exception to the law of growth which prevails throughout nature, and exemplifies how what is mightiest is often the product of what is apparently feeblest. Not only the giant oak,

capable of defying the fiercest storms, but whole forests which yield materials for a nation's fleets, may have lain wrapped up within a single tiny acorn. In history, whatever has been most enduring and has exerted most influence; has been born in obscurity and feebleness, and grown up by almost imperceptible stages—whereas, whatever has, like the gourd of Jonah, arisen to its full height of a sudden, has withered and died away with the same rapidity that it arose. But Christianity is the most striking instance of the kind. Its fountainhead is the manger of a stable in a small Judean town. The germ out of which it has all grown is the lowliest of lives, ending in the most shameful of deaths. Self-sacrifice to the uttermost,—that is the seed which has become the tree whose branches are spreading over the earth, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

There is a strange unobtrusiveness about the character and mission of the Author and Finisher of our faith. When we know who He was, the only begotten Son of God, and what His purpose was, the salvation of the world, we might expect to see Him take up a position full in the world's view, attracting to Himself man's whole attention, making kings His deputies, and philosophers His apostles,

and orators His heralds, and armed captains His attendants. But no! the manger of a stable was His cradle,—poverty, hard labours, great sorrows, keen sufferings, were His constant companions; He died as a felon amidst the jeers and execrations of His countrymen,—and was buried in a tomb not His own. The story of that lowly life and death of agony and shame was His legacy to the world. It was the foundation-stone, despised of the builders but accepted of God and precious, on which the divine kingdom could alone be built up, and on which it has, ever since it was laid, been gradually rising. It was the little seed-corn which had to be dropt into the ground and die ere the earth could bear a harvest of righteousness and peace. It was that by the preaching of which a few poor, illiterate Galilean fishermen were called upon to brave and overcome the opposition which all the wealth, authority, antiquity, military force, taste, and philosophy, as well as ignorance and sin, of the world, could muster against them, to conquer the prejudices of the Jews, to undermine the superstitions under which Rome had grown up to be the mistress of the world, to confound the subtleties and wisdom of the Greeks, and to dispel the darkness of heathenism. It looked the most hopeless of tasks. To the

eye of flesh nothing could be less magnificent, nothing could have less of promise, than the Gospel at its origin. It was indeed like a mustard-seed,—like "the least of all seeds."

There are instruction and warning for us in that. The Gospel is the most emphatic protest against judging of things by their outward appearance. It is the solemn and decisive testimony of God to the superiority of spiritual principle over material magnificence. It casts down power and might to exalt spirit and truth. Many persons have an eye only to behold external and worldly greatness. Royal pomp, military conquests, scientific achievements, wealth, rank, honours, dazzle and overawe them, but the spiritual is strangely hidden from them; the inherent grandeur of all self-sacrifice, and the surpassing beauty of all holiness, they cannot and they will not see. That it is nobler to subdue one's spirit than to take a city, is a hard saying for them; that there may be more of majesty in their poorest neighbour, more which a true and honourable mind can reverence, than in a king upon his throne, is inconceivable to them; that one soul is worth all the stars, is what they can neither understand nor believe. There is no hope for any one, however, so long as he persists in looking at things

with that dull, unspiritual eye. The Gospel, in all that is distinctive of it, is spiritual, and can only be spiritually discerned. The rose of Sharon must ever be to fleshly vision but a root out of a dry ground, without beauty or comeliness.

The parable having told us that the Gospel in its origin is small, weak, and apparently insignificant, proceeds to speak of its growth, of its amazing progress. From the least of seeds it becomes the greatest of herbs; from an almost invisible grain it rises into a tree, where the birds of the air find shelter. It is unnecessary to insist that the history of the last eighteen hundred years has amply verified this representation. The Church, which at Pentecost only numbered a few score of persons, soon counted its adherents by thousands, burst the trammels of Judaism, and, even in the lifetime of its first apostles, established itself, without any other instrumentality than the foolishness of preaching, in all the large towns of the civilised world. All Europe and America are now more or less under its sway, and it is advancing with slow but sure steps to the conquest of the entire earth. It is more important to observe, as the text specially calls on us to do, that this long history is throughout a growth —that it may be fitly likened to a seed becoming a

tree. Let us so look at it for a little, and see what lessons it has for our profit.

This is the first.—The whole of Christianity, in so far as it is true, once lay in a small compass. All the truths, all the institutions, all the virtues which it embodies, may be traced back to a single life as their germ. The mustard-tree was wholly in the mustard-seed. The oak, great although it now is, once lay wrapped up entire in the acorn. All that properly belongs to it lay folded there. Nothing save what is foreign and hurtful, nothing save excrescences and parasites, have come from any other source. The influences of light and heat, and wind and dew, have only brought out what was there from the first. It is so, likewise, with Christianity. It has grown up through eighteen hundred years, it covers now a very large portion of the earth, but all that truly belongs to it even at this hour has sprung from the lowly life of Jesus. All that is good in its creeds, its institutions, the conduct it inspires, has germinated from some word of His—has lain as a thought in His mind or an affection in His heart; and whatever man has introduced of his own into religious belief or practice is only an excrescence, a parasite, a cause of weakness and decay. The fulness that was in Him, the history

of the kingdom of God, as it becomes ever broader and deeper and longer, ought increasingly to display, but can never exhaust. The ideal which He left us ought to be gradually more closely approached, as age after age of Christian privileges passes away, leaving ever richer the inheritance of our race, but no son of Adam will fully realise, and far less transcend it. The lowliest life ever lived on earth has thus been infinitely the most fruitful. The least of all seeds has become the greatest among herbs.

Secondly, The seed has not only all the rudiments of the future tree within it, but the life which unfolds them and sends out first the root and trunk, and then the branches, leaves, blossoms, and fruit. And the word of the Gospel has likewise an indestructible principle of vitality, which cannot be repressed, cannot be arrested. It grows by the very necessity of its nature, under the influence of grace, just as the living seed, by the very necessity of its nature, under a genial sky cannot remain in the ground, but sends up blade and bud and branch. There is in this assertion no latent fatalism. Although the Gospel has indeed been in history like a tree growing out of a living seed, it follows not that human will has had nothing to do with its

progress. There is nothing in history, properly so called, with which human will has not had to do. Every improvement it tells of has been effected by human self-denial and toil. The country we live in was once covered with putrid morasses and gloomy forests, and yielded only a scanty and impure subsistence to a few hordes of wandering savages. Now its morasses are dried up, its forests cleared away, large cities stand thick strewn over it, its well-cultivated plains yield food enough for millions, and its industry produces an annual revenue the most enormous. What has wrought the change? Labour, and labour alone—labour of mind and of body. Not an inch of conquest has been won without mental exertion and physical toil, without anxious thought and an active hand. Our social order, our civil liberties, our science, our command of mechanical forces, our wealth, all that we have, and, it may almost be said, all that we are, are results inherited from former generations, and obtained by them for us only through earnest efforts and patient endurance, study and suffering, sweat and blood. Religion is no exception to this rule, but its most striking example. It has had nobler and more numerous martyrs and missionaries—has called forth more heroic labours and costlier sacri-

fices—than all other causes together. If the blood of the martyrs has not been the seed of the church, it has at least been the dew which watered the soil where that seed was scattered. And this is quite consistent with the fact that the Gospel grows by a life of its own,—that though man's labour is needed to apply and diffuse it, he neither makes it nor puts life and fruitfulness into it,—that he receives it with these in itself, so that if he cast it into the ground it will spring and grow up of its own divine energy, and according to its own divine laws.

Thirdly, Growth implies increasing divergence and definiteness of parts and functions. It is a separation of the one into the many, a change from the simple to the complex, from the vague to the distinct. The seed out of which a plant issues is at first uniform in tissue and composition, but soon it divides into two parts, afterwards new contrasts appear in each of these, and it is by endless such changes that the complex combination of tissues and organs in a perfect plant is produced. While the parts are thus increased in number, each of them becomes more prominent in itself, more sharply distinguished from others, and more strictly confined to its own special use. Wherever growth takes place, this is the process traceable. It is what we

see in every herb, in every animal, in civilisation, in government, language, science, and art. Different as all these are in themselves, there is only the one way in which they can grow, in which they can truly progress. The kingdom of God conforms to the same conditions. Its history has consisted throughout in the evolution of doctrines, institutions, and modes of life, out of a very simple germ. Our elaborate systems of theological science so far as true, our manifold institutions for religious and benevolent purposes so far as good, our endlessly diversified modes of social being so far as right, are developments of the living word of the Gospel, in which, however, they lay enfolded only as the tree in its seed, as results in their principle, as special and definite dogmas in broad and general statements.

Thus, to take only the intellectual development of Christianity, there has been the successive rise of various theological sciences, and each science has in its turn branched off into large natural divisions, within each of which truths have been multiplied, rendered definite, and brought into due correlation to one another. History records when and how all the more important steps in this process were taken, so that those who refuse to admit the existence of

development in this sense are chargeable with shutting their eyes to a series of facts which extends through eighteen hundred years. In the New Testament there is no religious science, but there are the rudiments of many. Each generation has been called and privileged to bring some truth or aspect of truth into clearer light, to counteract some error, to bear its part in unfolding the richness of meaning latent in the Word, that in the fulness of time the whole circle of Christian teaching might be traversed in its natural order. It is difficult for men of the present day to realise how the apostolic fathers, for instance, were able to support spiritual life on so small a stock of religious knowledge, and that so exceedingly vague and general even as to the central verities of the Gospel. A modern catechism for the use of children contains a far greater number of truths, and these far more accurately stated, than all their writings. This gain, we must admit, has not been obtained without considerable loss. In the course of the long intellectual movement spoken of many a serious error has been committed, falsehoods have been introduced as well as truths evolved, of principles really contained in Scripture some have been exaggerated and others overlooked, giving rise to one-sided systems as antagonistic as if founded

on assertions originally and essentially contradictory. A step in history, however, once taken cannot be retraced. If its movement is slow it is likewise too strong for any combination of human efforts to drive it backwards. Those who say, 'Let us cast to the winds our creeds, our systems, our definite dogmas, and return to the primitive simplicity of apostolic men,' forget that God has not left it to the world's own will to return of a sudden, or to return at all, to the point from which it has taken eighteen centuries for it to advance. They might as well counsel us to throw off all the laws and institutions, all the countless arrangements of the elaborated civilisation in which we live, and retrograde to the rude and simple life of the earliest dwellers in Asia and Europe. We are where we are, where long ages of thought and toil have placed us, and, even if ungrateful enough to desire it, there is no going back for us now.

Fourthly, The growth of the kingdom of God has been continuous. We may fail to measure its progress from day to day, because it is not rapid but slow, not with observation, but without it. We may be unable to detect that a plant which we looked upon yesterday is larger to-day than it was then, but a month hence the evidences of increase

will probably be abundant—and if not, at least a year hence. Still more may we be unable to trace the growth of the kingdom of God if we limit our scrutiny to a short period or a narrow area, although a more comprehensive view will clearly show that growth has been going on without interruption. The life to which it is due has remained ever identical with itself, casting off what is false and imperfect, but preserving and unfolding what is true and essential. The tree through which that divine life circulates has had indeed its seasons of winter desolation as well as of summer beauty. It has been torn by the tempest, and its goodly boughs have been broken. The wild boar out of the forest has whetted its tusks upon it. Deadly parasites have thrown their embraces around it. But all these have been overruled to its good. They have been no less salutary than severe. They have affected it as violent winds do the oak or the mountain-ash, giving it a firmer root and greater hardiness and strength. And, blessed be God, it lives and grows more vigorous than ever, with the dew of its immortal youth glittering like "orient pearl" on every leaf. There is no rooting it out. There is no cutting it down. There is no arresting its spread. It was as true a word as it was brave, that which

Theodore Beza uttered when he and his French Protestant compatriots were threatened with persecution by Henry IV.—"Sire, it is indeed the part of the Church of God, in whose name I speak, to endure blows and not to give them; but you will also please to remember that it is an anvil which has worn out many hammers."

There is still another truth involved, and it is one which we must not despise because it is simple. Growth requires time. God has everywhere placed that as an inevitable separation between germination and maturity, between the seed and the perfect tree. Let us conform, then, to the condition. When we are despondent or angry because our labours in a Christian cause are not crowned with immediate success, we are no wiser than the little child who deposits a seed in the ground and is grieved not to see it springing up on the very day it has done so. We ought to have confidence that the mustard-seed will reach, in spite of whatever appearances there may be to the contrary, its full growth; that the righteous cause will prevail, that the work of the Lord will be done, not to-day perhaps, nor to-morrow, but in good time. Let us possess our souls in patience. Why harass ourselves? God has a whole eternity in which to accomplish His purposes,

and these are the destruction of evil and the triumph of good. Bad men may reign and tyrannise their little day; bad causes may long prevail, but their doom is certain. Goodness and truth will be completely victorious in the end. It is sad to lie down and die with giant falsehoods still standing proudly erect and defiant, still weighing heavily on the hearts of men; but we have at least the consolation to reflect that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand,—that the breath of wickedness will not pass over the world for ever as a blast that burneth, —that the kingdom of God will fully come,—that the truth as it is in Jesus will illumine every land —and the cry, Worthy is the Lamb! spread and swell,

> "Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round." Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE LEAVEN.

MATTHEW xiii. 33.

IN meaning this parable is very similar to the previous one. It means, perhaps, all that that parable does, but it likewise means more. It gives expression to the same general principle, and yet it has its own distinctive idea. The general principle is, that the kingdom of God grows—that from a small beginning it progresses until it reaches the vastest magnitude. Both parables illustrate this truth equally well, or, if there be any difference, it is perhaps most strikingly done by the parable of the mustard-seed, "the least of all seeds," gradually springing up to be "the greatest among herbs."

The growth of any plant or tree, however, must fail to be an adequate image of the growth of the kingdom of God. It must be defective as a symbol in the important respect, that it does not exhibit

how the Gospel in its progress is related to surrounding elements. No sooner has a tree raised its head above the ground than it is free from all pressure and resistance. Its upward growth is through the most yielding of all mediums, through the atmosphere. It has nothing in immediate contact with it either to act on it or on which it may act. Hence a tree, although an admirable illustration of the growth of the kingdom of God in one aspect, is only a partial and inadequate emblem which requires to be supplemented by another. And no fitter symbol could be selected for the purpose than the one in our text—than leaven diffusing itself through meal. That brings vividly out the idea not only of progress and growth, but of the character of the progress and growth. It exhibits the Gospel as advancing by acting on all the elements around it, and transfusing and transforming them with its own spirit. The leaven not only spreads through the three measures of meal in which it is hid, but alters its nature and properties, so that the whole mass of meal, after the effectual working of the leaven, is quite different from what it was before. This is the distinctive thought, the special teaching of the parable; and I shall endeavour to exhibit it in reference, first, to the individual, and next, to

society. May God grant a blessing on what is to be said!

I. The kingdom of God in the heart is like leaven hid in meal. It is so, first of all, because something which does not belong to human nature, something which does not originate there, is introduced into it. The leaven was not in the meal from the first, did not inherently belong to it; on the contrary, a woman took the leaven and hid it in the meal. The meal did not change itself: and no more does man change himself. It is only a power not his own which can change him. The natural man cannot of himself put on the spiritual man. The Christian life is no mere unfolding of qualities proper to the ordinary worldly life. It is from above, is divine. Man has made many religions, but just because he has himself made them it is vain to expect that they can produce in him such a conversion as is needful. There are those who fancy that art, science, moral instruction, secular education, can improve human nature to the utmost; but we may be assured that effects can never so react upon their causes as essentially to alter their characters. The religion we need, therefore, is one not drawn from our own resources, but revealed from

heaven, and such a religion we have only in the manifestation of God in Christ. But the doctrine of the cross is indeed in a heart as leaven in meal. It is as if *hid* in the heart. You cannot see it. You cannot touch it. It ferments within, concealed from feeble human sense; a secret power of life at the centre of the soul; a silent, unobtrusive power slowly but surely working its way outwards. Those even who are the subjects of its influence cannot feel in themselves the process that day by day and hour by hour is going on; they can only judge of it by its effects, only measure it by a comparison of the different periods of their lives.

Before the Gospel can change the heart in any degree, before it can act either quickly or slowly, it must of course be *in* the heart, actually in it, and not outside of it, however near to it. The leaven did not, and could not, produce any change in the meal until the woman opened the mass of meal and put the leaven into the midst of it. Nor, my friends, will the truth as it is in Jesus produce any essential change in your hearts until your hearts are opened and that truth is hid in them. It is not enough that the Gospel should be in the country, not enough that it should be bound up in your Bibles, not enough that it should be in your mouths or even in your

heads; what is needed is that it be in your hearts —"hid" in your hearts. Leaven in one corner of a room will not leaven meal in another; and no less absurd is it to suppose that, if the Gospel be merely in your intellects, and the world be in your hearts, the Gospel so placed will renew your hearts and sanctify your lives. Let us pray, therefore, that God by His Spirit would put His truth where alone it can act for the renewal of our natures; for, if it never has been truly within us, it will be only so much the worse for us that it has been all around us—that it has been in closest contact with us.

The manner, also, in which leaven acts on meal illustrates singularly well the manner in which the Gospel of the kingdom, the truth as it is in Christ, acts on the heart and life. Leaven changes the nature, yet does not destroy the substance of meal. Meal leavened remains meal, but endowed with new properties, and adapted for new uses. It acquires another character, another appearance, another fragrance and taste. So the Gospel does not destroy any inherent power or faculty of the mind, but gives to all its powers and faculties a different character, a new direction.

It does not even destroy the natural peculiarities distinctive of individuals. Thus, there are certain

temperaments dependent on bodily constitution. The Gospel does not subvert these. A person continues, after the heartiest submission to Christian truth, to be of the temperament with which he was born, sanguine or melancholic, phlegmatic or nervous. What Christian truth tends to do is merely to expel from each temperament the weaknesses and vices to which it is peculiarly prone. Far from being incompatible with any temperament, it readily adapts itself to each in order to purify and ennoble it.

Again, different men have been endowed with intellect, sensibility, and will, in very different proportions. In one man intellect greatly preponderates; in another sensibility; and in another will. There are some who seem, as it were, all intellect, who analyse everything, reason out everything—who can find no rest until they see clearly the naked truth—who must have their grasp firmly on principles before they can proceed at all, but who are exceedingly self-contained as to the expression of feeling, and from whose lips anything like sentiment or poetry would sound unnatural and unreal. There are others whose minds, although far inferior in closeness of intellectual grasp and keenness of intellectual penetration, yet possess a delicacy and depth

of feeling which render them perhaps still more worthy of admiration. There are others who with very moderate endowments, either intellectual or moral, command the greatest respect, and win implicit confidence through their force, decision, and rectitude of will. Now, one of these forms of character may be more desirable than another, and a better form than any of them, an ideally best form, might be one in which the three elements—intellect, sensibility, and will—were equally mingled. But certain it is that all the forms exist, and that their distinctive features have their ground in the original constitution of individuals. Certain it is also that the Gospel does not reduce these forms to one common type. It has no tendency even to lessen any of their characteristic peculiarities. There is scope and need for them all in the kingdom of God. The more varied are the phases of human nature the more capable is it of reflecting the glorious character of Christ, so marvellous in its fulness, its comprehensiveness. What the Gospel does, then, is, while leaving individual peculiarities intact, to breathe into men, otherwise the most unlike, one spirit—to make them all strenuous for one object—to bend all their faculties in one direction—to animate them all with one faith, one love, one hope—

to adorn them all with humility, self-denial, and holiness.

Again, the Gospel acts like leaven, because it works from within outwards in all directions. Leaven diffuses itself through the mass in which it is hid equally all round until the whole is leavened. So the Gospel is a power which does not exert itself, as it were, only in one straight line, but in every direction all through the nature. It does not seize on one faculty of the soul and change it, and then advance to another faculty and change it, and so on till the whole man is changed. It does not deal with the will at one time, with the feelings at another, and the intellect at another, waiting until it has effected a complete conquest in the one region of human nature before it proceeds to the others; but it grasps all the elements and faculties of the soul at once, and works on all simultaneously. From its commencement, and even when it is most feeble, you can clearly see that what it aims at is universal dominion over human nature; even then it asserts its claim to have every region of man's being as its own; even then it does not fail to make itself felt in some measure throughout them all.

It acts on the intellect, permeates and changes it. It does not make a feeble intellect equal in power to

a strong one it does not change the natural aptitudes of any man's intellect; but it effects in every intellect which comes under its influence a process of spiritual enlightenment, which enables it to discern the things of God. The natural understanding, even when soundest and most trustworthy as to what is natural, is blind to what is spiritual, and the Gospel is required, without depriving it of any original aptitude or peculiar endowment, to transform it into an intellect with a higher power than it had before—the power of looking on the eternal and divine as well as on the temporal and worldly, and which makes constant use of the power imparted to it for that purpose. The Gospel acts in like manner, and at the same time, on the feelings and the will, on the whole emotional and moral nature. It does not eradicate any natural desire, but makes the various natural desires pure and noble instead of gross and debased—fills the soul with heavenly aspirations and holy resolutions, works in it love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, which are the fruits of the spirit; and expels adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such-

like, which are the deeds of the flesh. It does not destroy will, or render it less strong, decided, and free, but confirms it in its pursuit of whatever is true and beautiful and good, and in its opposition to whatever is false and foul and sinful. Thus as leaven hid in meal brings forth bread, as it develops and improves the properties of meal into the properties of bread, so the Gospel hid in the carnal nature brings forth the spiritual nature, develops and improves the faculties and qualities of the old man into those of the new man, who with no additional primitive principles of being has thoughts and feelings, aspirations and actions, of which the old man, the unregenerate nature, was utterly incapable.

This diffusion of the Gospel through the life is like that of leaven in meal, secret, gradual, and complete. It is secret. The operation of the Spirit in the regeneration of man is as invisible as the operation of leaven in the conversion of meal into bread. No eye but that of God can trace it. Like the viewless wind, its presence is only known to be by its results. It is gradual. As leaven does not leaven the whole lump at once, so the Gospel spreads through a heart only by degrees. It tends, however, to become complete. As leaven operates till the whole mass

in which it is hid is leavened, so the word of life, received into the heart, ceases not its effectual working till the whole man is made a new creation in Christ Jesus.

This word of life, so mighty to renew, to perfect, to save, is it, my friends, in you? Is it exerting in you its holy and blessed efficacy? If not, let me ask you what hinders it? What keeps it from you? What arrests it in you? There may, as the parable itself suggests, be two causes. The woman may not assiduously enough perform her work. The truth may not be brought to bear in its fulness and purity upon your hearts. But even in this case the blame must be in great part your own, and the remedy lies wholly in your hand. The truth is beside you. You have the Bible. Read it, study it, pray God to bless it to you, and He will do so.

Or the fault may be in the meal. The old leaven of wickedness may work so strongly in you as to counteract the new leaven of righteousness. But still a remedy the most efficacious is within your reach. Give yourselves up into God's hands, strive for His spirit, and He will bring your wicked will into obedience to His own holy will, and this is salvation, this is eternal life. God's will done is the kingdom of heaven come.

II. Having thus endeavoured to show that the Gospel works in the heart of the individual like leaven in meal, I have now to show that it works after the same manner in society. This has indeed been already so far done. When we have proved that the Gospel produces a complete change on the human heart, we have really proved that it produces a complete change on human society. Society is made up of individuals. Its character is determined by their characters. A society cannot be bad if the individuals that compose it are good. If we have succeeded, then, in showing that, like leaven changing meal into bread, the Gospel working on the carnal heart of the natural man changes it into the new heart of the spiritual man, we have necessarily in and by that very proof shown that the Gospel is a power to effect an entire change for the better on society, a power to convert it from carnal into spiritual.

This line of thought, however, while perfectly sound and sufficient to the extent now said, fails to bring out what is the most essential, the distinctive truth of the parable. It proves that there must be a change wrought by the Gospel on society, but does not explain the manner in which the change takes place. It shows us that the Gospel will and must

change society, but not *how* it changes it, although it is to the nature of the process of change that the parable directs our chief attention. So that we still require to exhibit, in a distinct and separate form, how the Gospel leavens society, imbues it with a new spirit—its own divine spirit—transforms and sanctifies it.

I can conceive some one saying in his heart, 'This does not interest me in the least. I do not want to know what the Gospel is to society; I want to know only what it is to myself. It is of little moment to me how society is to be saved; what only is of moment is, how I myself am to be saved.' But if any one feels so, I must tell him that he is clearly not on the right track even for his own salvation; that salvation is first of all, and above all, deliverance from the natural selfishness which makes a man have such thoughts as these; that this deliverance is what is deepest in redemption, what is most essential, what is the condition of all else about it. To him who cares to know merely what the Gospel is to himself, to him it is as yet nothing. He who has no interest how society is to be saved, but only how he is to be saved himself, will never, so long as he continues in that state of mind, be saved himself. A Christian is one who has learned the secret of look-

ing at the kingdom of God and delighting in the contemplation of it in itself and for itself; who has learned to pray in the spirit of the Lord's Prayer, to pray that the Father's name may be hallowed, and that His kingdom may come, and His will be done, before he ask anything for himself. God first, himself last; the man who does not feel this in the true order is no right-hearted child of God. It is the order which sin broke, and which Christ through His Spirit restores, and the very crisis of life for a man is when he acquiesces in it as the true order.

It is strange how blind men can be to this. A selfish man may sometimes be seen most anxious to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He would give any amount of money, or tears, or prayers, or labours, to enter in. Yet it may be quite clear to all eyes he does not enter in. He may remain a mean, narrow, grasping nature. He may never find the salvation he seeks, just because he conceives of it as selfishly as he does of everything else. He seeks the kingdom of God as being for him, and not he for it. He will not comprehend that only when he has been raised by the Spirit of God above selfish desire, and enabled to take God's will for his own, and to live for God's glory and not his own, can an

entrance into the kingdom be ministered to him. He is not willing to lose his life—his natural self—and so he cannot find the true life, the spiritual life. To set the name of God before us as our highest aim, to feel a supreme interest in the kingdom of God, to take the will of God as the rule of all we do,—the power to wish and do this is what is first and deepest in salvation, and the forgiveness of our sins, grace, and final glory, as well as daily bread, are given in subordination to it; but if we think to save ourselves otherwise than through the sacrifice of ourselves, our names, our glories, our wills, before the name, glory, and will of God, we deceive ourselves. The salvation which God offers us is of its very nature deliverance from an exclusive concern about ourselves. No one who has experienced it in any measure can feel indifferent about what the work of Christ is to the world—how God's name is treated, how God's kingdom advances in the world—if he only secure his own safety. The more a man has experienced it, the more he feels as if he could be almost willing to be himself a castaway, if thereby the glory of his God or the salvation of his fellow-men were to be promoted. The kingdom of heaven acquires a growing importance in his eyes, and he comes more and more to realise

that his highest glory is to have no glory distinct from it, is to be the servant, the agent, the instrument of it.

The Gospel works in society like leaven in a mass of meal. That is the assertion of the text, and few have ventured to meet it with a direct denial. Infidels themselves have felt constrained to confess that the Gospel has exerted a powerful, and often a beneficial, influence in past ages; and have not ventured to say more than that it has been productive of evil as well as of good, that it has by this time exhausted itself, and that now the world can do without it. It has, as far as I am aware, been reserved for our days that a man should rise up and propound the monstrous absurdity that the Gospel, that religion, has had little or no influence on mankind—that knowledge, that science, is the sole source of social progress. It is not necessary to examine and refute the reasonings by which this extraordinary notion was supported; but the fact that a man of very considerable abilities, and of immense stores of various kinds of knowledge, and especially of historical knowledge, could, in the midst of all the light of the nineteenth century, hold such an opinion, is of itself most instructive. God had given to this man, whose early and sudden

death caused a regret so general and just, an intellect of more than ordinary power, and, alas! he made an idol of it. He looked on intellect, knowledge, science, as all in all, and here was where his doing so led him. He tried to prove mere intellect the one thing, great above all things, and by the very attempt only proved how little and limited it is —how much, when self-reliant and left to itself, it is at the mercy of any delusion that comes in its way, how much it needs to be taught from above truth after truth, moment by moment. For Christ's word is manifestly true, and the philosopher's contradiction of it is manifestly false. There is no need of arguing to any one who has got natural eyesight and judgment that the springing up of the grass and the growth of the grain in his fields, the blossoming and bearing of the trees, the singing of birds, the glancing of the waters, the radiance on the hills, the fruitfulness, the gladsomeness, and the beauty of creation, are due in great part to the light and heat of the sun; and there is as little need of arguing to any man who has got spiritual eyesight and judgment that what is best in his own heart and life, in the hearts and lives of others, and in the institutions around him, that the spiritual excellence and beauty to be found in society, are

mainly due to Christ, the Sun of the whole spiritual world.

The truth as it is in Christ diffuses itself through society like leaven through meal. It works from within outwards. It pervades and improves society by its own inherent virtue, drawing no assistance from external force. It is spirit acting on spirit and generating a new life which ever tends to its own perfection, to full realisation in all the relations and institutions of society. This must take time. If the Gospel were a mere form of worship, if it were the practice of certain rites and ceremonies, men might be all constrained at once, by threats or promises, punishments or rewards, to join themselves to that worship, to go through those rites and ceremonies; or if it were a mere creed, consisting of so many articles to be learned, a sufficient staff of teachers might make the whole world Christian in a very short time; but as it is a leaven which must ferment through society till the whole, till every power, every institution, is leavened, the process is necessarily tardy.

It is a twofold process—special and general. There is a special action of part on part, and also a general action of the whole on each part. There is a special action of part on part. Christ,

when He had communicated of His life and Spirit to His apostles, for instance, enabled them too, poor and despised and unlearned as they were, to communicate of the same to others, and so to become in their turn the leaven of the world. In a mass of meal subjected to the action of leaven, each leavened particle acts upon all those in immediate contact with it, leavening more deeply the only partially leavened, and conveying the leaven to those which have not previously come under its power; and not otherwise is it in society, where every individual who has experienced in himself the efficacy of the Gospel becomes for the circle of his influence, as leaven, to work still farther. He communicates of the grace which he has received. He commends the truth by his good words and works, and causes those who behold them to glorify the Father which is in heaven. The Gospel uses, in order to carry out its holy and blessed purpose, all who submit themselves to it as fire, when it takes hold of wood, employs what it kindles to transmit the flame still onwards.

Besides this special action of part on part, of individual on individual, there is also, as I have said, a general action of the whole on each part of society, on the individual. The Gospel is not without in-

fluence even where it is not closed with as the power of God unto salvation. It so far imbues, or at least modifies, by its spirit all the laws, institutions, and usages of society, that none, not even those most hostile to it, live as they would have done if it had not been. It improves both the characters and conduct of men in every case, although it may be only seldom that it works a genuine conversion in them. It demonstrates its energy more or less even on those who count themselves unworthy of eternal life. It cannot regenerate men in spite of themselves, for regeneration consists in free and loving self-surrender; but it can make them somewhat less unlike Christ by acting on them, as it were, not from the centre, but from the circumference—by acting on them through circumstances, through a providential arrangement of general historical facts — and this it has done from age to age.

Let us draw from history an illustration or two. The civilisations of antiquity rested on force. Slavery was their central fact. It is only slowly, only step by step, that society has emancipated itself from this condition of things. St Paul sent back a fugitive slave to his master, the runaway convert Onesimus, to Philemon; and neither in the

Old Testament nor the New is there any explicit statement against slavery. The spirit of the Gospel condemns it, but not the letter. The spirit of the Gospel, however, gradually put forth its divine power. Little by little the slave of antiquity gave place to the serf of the middle ages, attached to the soil, but also protected by it; little by little feudal Europe ripened into industrial Europe, and the serf became the hired labourer; little by little free labour and commerce rose into importance, and brought with them security of person and property, the spirit of independence, the sense of human equality, the power of self-government, a truer conception of justice, the arts of peace, a new and broader and far more Christian civilisation. Our own day has seen the ancient tyranny of man over man, in its double form of pure slavery and of serfage, receive two signal and heavy blows, one on the old continent and the other on the new, and on both, in Russia and in America alike, the present has proved itself stronger than the past—what is pagan has had to succumb before what is Christian. And the Gospel will not rest till, gently or violently, by persuasion or catastrophe, all the social chains which sin has forged shall be broken, till the personal and eternal dignity of men shall be universally acknowledged,

and the idea of evangelical freedom and fellowship perfectly realised.

Take another example. See what the Gospel has done in the domestic circle. The pagan family, with its deplorable degradation of the woman, continued for generations within the Church. That was cast off at length, but the grave error of despising and depreciating domestic life was introduced. The Reformers were gradually led to perceive that the family required not to be suppressed, but only to be sanctified; yet their views of it were pervaded by a narrow and legal spirit which has borne bitter fruits, and which society has been ever since outgrowing. The true conception of the family is of far more recent date than the Reformation, and is still vague and imperfect. If we ask to whom this progress is due, no one can distinctly tell us, for it is a silent and secret movement which has been little if at all associated with individual and party names. It comes of that unceasing purpose which runs through the ages, widening the thoughts and sympathies of men. It comes of that invisible power which dwells in the Gospel and works through humanity, leavening it more and more, transforming it more and more into the holy, beautiful, and glorious kingdom of God.

History abounds in similar instances of progress; and it is most interesting to the Christian mind to trace through the ages the growth, slow but sure, of such virtues as philanthropy and toleration, and such systems as criminal and international law, for it proves with the clearest evidence that the world of human affairs moves on under the influence of a Divine force, under the guidance of a Divine wisdom, to a Divine goal, to a happy and magnificent consummation. This general process cannot of course be looked for where the meal is yet wholly, or almost wholly, unreached by the leaven, as, for instance, beyond the bounds of Christendom altogether, but even there in many places there goes on, as it were, a strange process of fermentation in the meal itself, fitting it for the presence and working of the leaven. All honour is due to those brave men who have gone forth, at the peril of their lives, to proclaim in heathen lands the glad tidings of salvation; yet when we consider the few thousands of souls which they have gained to Christ, and then think on the hundreds of millions that call on Mahomet, and Boudha, and Brahma, what has been done appears only as if a grain of sand had been detached from a mountain of rock. But it is impossible not to perceive that the rock is in many places

crumbling down of itself; that alongside of the special work which the missionaries have been accomplishing, there is a general and far vaster work which God has been carrying on Himself; that false religions, having outlived themselves, are now yielding to the action of many influences, and tottering to their fall; that they continue to exist merely because time is requisite for a dead system, as for a withered tree, to moulder to pieces. Their votaries have lost faith in them—begin to be possessed by yearnings for something higher and better—begin to feel the cravings of a thirst which the waters of life that are in Christ can alone satisfy. This God has brought about by a multitude of causes, making Providence a minister of grace, and thus fitting the meal for the contact of the leaven, when it should in the fulness of time be hid in it. Working noiselessly and invisibly amidst these false religions, His Spirit has been preparing an abundant harvest for the kingdom of heaven, and we only need to send labourers enough forth in order to reap and gather it in.

The last words of the parable have been spoken for our confidence and rejoicing. The leaven, we are told, will work "till the whole be leavened." That is our ground of assurance for the final and complete

triumph of the Gospel; that as hitherto it has been, with many seeming and local reverses, ever really and in the main progressive, so will it be in the future; that the Jews shall be brought in, that Mohammedanism shall fall, that idolatry shall be shattered, and the entire world be laid as a trophy at the feet of Him who once wore a crown of thorns. The whole will be leavened.

My friends, do you wish to have any share in the joys and rewards of the hour of triumph? If so, arise and share in the labours and hardships of the conflict. Do something to bring the war with evil to a successful close—to hasten on the coming of the heavenly kingdom—to leaven with the grace that bringeth salvation and all blessedness those who are around you. You may not have a wide sphere of influence, but you have one—work in it. You are in the midst of a household, act there; you have relatives and neighbours, act on them. But remember this, which is the last word of my discourse, but not the least important for you to reflect on: you cannot leaven others unless you have yourselves been leavened; you cannot give of what you have not got; you cannot spread the knowledge and love of a Saviour whom you have never known nor loved. Oh! see, then, that you have the true leaven, Christ

Himself, in your own hearts! See that the good work be going on in you, changing your whole being and conduct! Then you will not fail to leaven others, and to be a savour of life unto life in the world. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

THE TREASURE.

MATTHEW xiii. 44.

I HAVE already explained four of the parables in this chapter. In the first, the parable of the sower, our blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ, set forth how the word of His kingdom, the word of grace, the word of salvation, would affect the various classes of persons with whom it would come into contact; in the next, the parable of the wheat and tares, He taught how Satan would try to undo the good work of the Son of Man, by sending evil and hypocritical persons among true Christians, and that it would be neither right nor wise to attempt to separate them; then, by the parable of the mustard-seed, He illustrated the growth of His kingdom, which is small at first, but very great in the end; and in the parable of the leaven He described the sort of process by which His kingdom would spread in the world.

All these parables were spoken to the great multitudes that stood on the shore of the Sea of Galilee while our Lord addressed them out of a boat,—to a vast crowd of persons, where old and young, male and female, ignorant and educated, friends and enemies, those who had never heard Him before and those who had heard Him often, were all together, listening to Him,—and, therefore, they exhibited the kingdom of God in its most general aspects. They described it as what it would be to all persons, as what it would be to society. They were suitable words for those who had entered into the kingdom to hear, but they did not assume that those who heard them had entered into the kingdom; most of those who heard them had not done so.

The Gospel is not, however, a mere general possession. It is not what society has, and yet which belongs to no person in particular. It is meant to be a special, a personal possession; it is meant to be a joy in society, but also a joy in the heart of every man and woman who will receive it when offered to them. It is not enough that the Gospel be in society, it is not enough that its influences be falling like sunlight or dew around and upon us; but we must, to be savingly profited, take it by

reason and will, by faith and love, into our hearts and lives. We must appropriate it; we must, each one for himself or herself, make it our own. There is a sense, as I explained last Sabbath, in which the Gospel influences and blesses everybody in a country like this. All are better off in their circumstances, and better too in their conduct, than they would have been if not for it. Its branches shelter and its fruits refresh those even who do not acknowledge it. When it has leavened a country, all share more or less in the leavening, and share more or less in the very numerous and very great advantages which result from it. Education is more general, manners more gentle, vices less gross, virtues and charities more abundant, where the Gospel has any hold or footing; and no one can fail to have his character influenced by these circumstances for the better, as well as his happiness promoted.

But the kingdom of God ought to be far more to us than this implies; it ought to be enjoyed by us in itself, and not merely in some of the benefits which flow from it. It will not be for our profit in the end that we have lived in the midst of Christian light and privileges, if we have notwithstanding set Christ at naught, and refused to have Him

as our King to reign over us; on the contrary, the privileges we have enjoyed will in such a case all in the end tell against us. The sentence of our condemnation will be so much the more severe; the strokes of our punishment will be so much the more numerous and heavy. The inhabitants of Bethsaida and Capernaum were acquainted with many blessed truths which those of Tyre and Sidon were ignorant of; they were not chargeable with the same dreadful crimes as those of Sodom and Gomorrah: yet they were told by Him who was the truth itself that it would be more tolerable for any of these cities in the day of judgment than for them. The reason was precisely the greater abundance and superior clearness of the light that was around them. And for the same reason we may rest assured that, let our outward behaviour be as correct and irreproachable as it may, if we have not the true piety which springs only from faith in Christ, from the love to God which is possible only through faith in Christ, that it will be more tolerable in that awful day for any people that either is now on this earth or ever has been on it, than for us, since no people on God's earth has ever been favoured as we have been.

It was therefore very natural and appropriate

that, after our Lord had spoken these general parables—after He had sent the great multitudes who heard them away, and was alone with His disciples —He should add, for the special use of this more select audience, the two beautiful parables of the hid treasure and the pearl of great price, which describe the kingdom of heaven as it is not to all men, but to those only who really find it—who come into possession not merely of some of its benefits, but into possession of itself. Most of those now around Him had to some extent done so. It is true they had not yet attained any very clear view of the nature of the kingdom of God, or any very adequate estimate of its value. They knew only most imperfectly what it consisted in. They attributed to it much that was not true, while they wholly overlooked much that was essential to it. But yet they had so far lighted upon it; some stumbling on it as if by accident, and others discovering it as what they had been longing and searching for. Although they did not know aright what they had laid hold of in drawing around Christ, they felt that they had laid hold of what was very marvellous, very precious—of what would reveal itself to them as more and more marvellous and precious; and that feeling, vague as it was, being genuine, placed them

in a special relation to the kingdom of heaven, and Christ, with great condescension and grace, spoke to that feeling in them.

This is a fact full of comfort for all times, and especially so, perhaps, for this present time, when men's views of religion are often so vague, so fluctuating, and uncertain. The minds of many most able and amiable persons are strongly shaken and unsettled as to the great principles of faith which have long been most firmly received among us. We may well see it with sorrow, but I hope we do not see it without sympathy, with unreasoning anger, or with cold contempt, for such was not the mind which was in Christ. He never turned away from a pure intention and an honest heart. He bore with the utmost dulness and bewilderment of intellect, as well as with the utmost infirmity of moral purpose and saddest failures in moral practice, wherever a spark of true love to himself existed or could be elicited. I repeat, it is a consolation to know, in the present times of troubled thought and perplexity of heart, that wherever, even amidst the strangest doubts and denials, His clear yet pitying eye beholds an earnest longing for truth and sincere desire for deliverance from sin and for holiness of life, there He will not refuse to manifest Himself in

presence, power, and love, until, through the gradual enlightenment which He imparts, the whole body is full of light.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field." You must have observed that, in the parables of our Lord, the suppositions made are such as are not merely conceivable or possible, but such as are natural and conformable to common occurrences. What they assumed were what were often to be seen in the works of creation or the events of providence. The reason was, not that the parables themselves required it—for their meanings would have been conveyed as correctly, although less impressively, if the suppositions proceeded upon had not had anything to correspond to them in the real world—but that common things and daily customs might thereby be invested with sacredness and spiritual significance. So was it here. The search for hid treasure was a pursuit well known in Palestine, where property has never been so secure as it is in our own highly favoured land, and where despotic governments, revolutions, invasions, conquests, pestilences, earthquakes, and other calamities, have in all probability often led those who possessed wealth to conceal it in the fields or elsewhere. Eastern stories very frequently turn on the discovery of hid

treasure, and the Bible has many allusions to the same event. It is stated on good authority that there are even at present hundreds of persons in Palestine who have abandoned the regular pursuits of industry and devoted themselves to the secret search for hid treasure. The supposition here made by our Lord was therefore no improbable one, but had such a reference to an existing custom as to make the parable vivid and impressive, while at the same time it connected a divine truth with a worldly pursuit, as Christ so constantly did; for He saw in the most ordinary occurrences holy mysteries, whereas we too often see in holiest mysteries only what is common and uninviting. Wherever Christ looked He beheld treasures of truth that had been hidden from the foundation of the world, unlike us, who often do not see those which are lying glancing before us on the very surface. Let us pray earnestly, my friends, as for an unspeakable blessing, that we may receive the spirit which was in Christ more abundantly, so that our eyes may be opened and quickened to see in some measure as He saw.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure. There is no treasure in the world which merits the slightest comparison with it. It is more precious than anything earth can afford, even for the life

that now is, while it, at the same time, enriches the soul, which other treasures can do nothing for. Those who have worldly wealth can have delicate food, and rich dresses, and fine houses, and large estates, and many servants; but no real happiness is to be found in these things. If some do seem to find happiness in them, it is happiness of a sort not to be desired. The unhappiness of a man is better than the happiness of a brute. The unhappiness which springs from the possession of a thoughtful mind and a heart of wide affections is better than the contentment which is due to a stupid mind and a narrow heart. And very stupid must be the mind, and very narrow must be the heart, which the wealth of this world can satisfy; for it can, strictly speaking, procure nothing either for the mind or the heart. Mountains of gold will not buy the least grain of true wisdom, nor even of common sense. Mountains of gold will not buy for us the affection or respect of one honest man; the affection and respect which gold can buy being not worth the purchase at any price, however cheap. Mountains of gold, it is still more certain, cannot buy the forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, the love of God, the consolations of the Holy Spirit, or eternal life, without which, whatever else a man may have,

he is a degraded and wretched being, poor, blind, and naked, and all the more to be pitied if ignorant that he is so. The kingdom of heaven is a very different and a vastly more precious sort of treasure, having in it what may well satisfy the most capricious mind and heart, the soul most avaricious of happiness; for this treasure is no other than Christ Himself, and the fulness which is in Him — the wisdom, the righteousness, the sanctification, the redemption, and all the other stores of unsearchable riches which are in Him. The man who has this treasure, although destitute of every other, although in outward condition only a beggar or a slave, is rich indeed, is most blessed and happy, even here below. He has in himself, or, to speak more accurately, in Christ dwelling in him, sources of joy, the deepest, the purest, the most divine. And this treasure, unlike every other sort of treasure, will be enjoyed for ever. It will not take wings to itself and flee away when we need it most. No accident will spoil us of it. It will not leave us, and we shall not have to leave it. We may well employ all diligence in accumulating it, for we shall find it, when life here is over, all laid up for us in heaven— ay, and increased at a marvellous rate of interest. Oh, set your hearts on this treasure, so precious for

time, so precious for eternity! Oh, set your hearts on it with a holy avarice!

The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure. There can be no more certain nor even more obvious word than that. But we are also told it is like treasure *hid in a field,* which is not so obvious. Is it not rather a treasure which has been made most manifest than one which has been hidden? It, in one sense, undoubtedly is so. The truth as it is in Christ has been made known to us not obscurely, but very clearly. It does not require ingenuity or ability or learning to get at it. Once it was hid, even in the strictest sense—hid from ages and generations—hid in God—hid in His eternal decree and purpose. There it was quite out of the range of man's sight or reach; there, so long as God was pleased to keep it as His own secret, man could not possibly find it. It was only because it was in a place which he had access to, and where he was engaged at work, that the man in this parable lighted upon the buried treasure; and so if God had kept His purpose to Himself, and not made it known, as He has been pleased to do, we must have remained ignorant of it for ever. Our feeble faculties, which cannot penetrate into the true nature and vital laws of the tiny blade of grass or

the least of living creatures, would certainly never have detected what was hid in the eternal counsels of the Almighty.

But in Christ "the mystery hid since the world began, and from all ages, was made manifest to the saints." Yes; but only to the saints. The kingdom of God is now clearly revealed, and yet it is hid from multitudes. Christ is disclosed in all the glory of His perfections in words as plain and emphatic as words can be; and yet these words do not carry their true meaning to countless minds. The things of the kingdom of God can be, and are, comprehended by babes, and yet the wise and prudent often do not understand them. To one it is given to know, and to another it is not given. The race is here not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Purity of heart prevails over power of intellect. The Gospel is love, and so it can be known only by love.

I do not say, you will observe, that in no sense can man of himself make Gospel truth his own. I do not attribute to him a supernatural darkness, but a natural darkness, that being truly deep enough. He may take the Scriptures and apprehend, remember, analyse, reason upon, and apply their statements, and his ideas and inferences may

be quite correct as mere conceptions. But even when He has done so, he will not have found Christ after all; the kingdom of God in its living power will still be as much hid from him as ever—hid from himself in his own system. The thoughts of the natural man about divine things may be true as mere thoughts, but they will be inevitably devoid of that sense of excellence which these objects ought to excite; whereas the man whose heart has been renewed, although he may be very deficient in intellect and culture, has that perception of worth, beauty, and holiness which alone answers to their character. He sees in the kingdom of heaven what, with all its revelations, instructions, consolations, light, glory, and blessing, it most truly is—a treasure, a treasure of unspeakable value; and this is what no man not taught of God ever does.

The outward revelation of the truth and grace of God does not render unnecessary the presence and working of the Spirit of God; for an outward revelation, where God does not grant the inward illumination of the Spirit, is given, and yet not given—open, and yet sealed. The letter is there, and the forms of truth are there, but the truth itself is hid. Since the eye can only see what it brings with it—the capacity of seeing—neither mere

bodily vision nor mere intellectual vision can apprehend spiritual realities. The things of the Spirit must be spiritually discerned. And accordingly we find that, so far from the Spirit having been withdrawn in the measure that the truth has been disclosed, the dispensation of the Spirit has correspondingly increased. The economy of the latter days in which we live is not more emphatically the economy of a completed revelation than of the Spirit. It is as distinguished above the ages that preceded the accomplishment of our Saviour's work by the variety and number, the freeness and fulness, of the spiritual influences conferred upon believers, as by the perfection of the revelation which they enjoy. We have not only many and most marvellous truths made known to us in the records of the evangelists and the epistles of the apostles, which patriarchs and prophets desired to see and were not permitted, we are also, through a more bounteous communication of the Spirit, brought into a closer contact with the truth than was granted to them. We are as greatly favoured with respect to the inward gift as the outward. May we remember that to whom much has been given, of them much shall be required!

There has been considerable discussion as to what

is meant by "the field" in which this treasure was hid. Some say the world; others say the Scriptures; and others, again, the Church. I would say all of them—everything in which Christ is. Whatever contains the power of the kingdom is the field; and the word and ordinances of worship are most of all so, because spiritual good comes to us most of all through them. This field is quite open to us —we are in it, and walk over it day by day; and barren, waste, and worthless it does appear to many, for they are unconscious of the treasure which is there, so close to the surface and so priceless in value. It is very solemn, my dear friends, to think how the very freeness and frequency of our access to the institutions of the Lord often blind us to the divine glory which they are filled with, and which we ought to see shining brightly forth from them.

This treasure hid in a field, the parable goes on to tell us, a man found. I must, by my previous remarks, have made sufficiently clear what is here meant by finding. It is seeing in Christ a Saviour, and in salvation the one thing needful. It is seeing and believing that the Gospel is glory to God, peace on earth, and goodwill to men. And this is done when God removes the blindness of our natures

and takes away the veil from our hearts—when He opens our eyes to see, and moulds our hearts to love.

There was, it would seem, no intentional search on this man's part for the treasure he found. He was not in quest of it, as the merchant in the next parable was of goodly pearls, but he came upon it, as it were, by accident. He is thus the type of those who, while not looking for the truth, somehow stumble upon it; who are not aware that there is a truth which will give aim and purpose and blessedness to their lives, until it is unexpectedly revealed to them in its celestial attractiveness; who feel accomplished in themselves this gracious word of God, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest to them that asked not after me." Now, this is indeed a most blessed fact for us to know, that even while we are not seeking God He is seeking us; that even while we are fleeing from Him He follows after us, and presents Himself to us with offers of mercy and love at the most unexpected turns and in the most unexpected ways; very blessed to know that He arrests many almost in spite of themselves.

But beware lest you make a bad use of this fact, and fancy search unnecessary. It is true that some

without seeking find—that to some who are not thinking about Him Christ is revealed all of a sudden, and so revealed that He is immediately and with joy received as Lord and Saviour. This may happen. Yes; but a "may happen," a mere peradventure, is surely a very dangerous thing to be content with in a matter of such awful moment as eternal life or eternal death. It is surely infatuation to lean one's whole weight on—to put one's whole trust in—a thread like that, when hanging between the glories of heaven and the horrors of hell. And the infatuation is all the wilder because we have no need to peril our soul's salvation on any peradventure. "Seek, and ye shall find." That is a very clear and very positive promise. The man who does not seek may perhaps find, but there can be no doubt whatever that the man who does seek will find. Seek, therefore, with a sense of the value of what you seek—seek earnestly, diligently, humbly—and God will give you all that your heart can desire, even the unsearchable riches of His own grace.

We have now to consider the conduct of the man who found the treasure. He is represented as doing precisely what would be done in real life: he is represented as overjoyed, and taking all prudent

and necessary steps to make the treasure his own. To attempt removing it at once would be difficult and dangerous. He might be seen by some one; the owner of the field, at least, would almost certainly begin to suspect. So he covers up the treasure again, and sells everything he has, and buys the field, and is thus enabled, without molestation or danger, to secure the treasure. It may perhaps be said that this was not right; that the treasure belonged to the owner of the field; and that the man who found it was guilty of getting it unfairly into his possession. Others may take a different view, and think it justly belonged to the discoverer. But our parable does not in any way require us to argue the question. It does not teach us whether what this man did was right or wrong, but that we ought to do in spiritual things as he did in temporal things; that we should be as eager and prudent about treasure in heaven as he was about treasure on earth. Conduct not only questionable like that of this man, but positively wicked like that of the unjust steward, may yet, in certain aspects of it, be a spiritual example to us. There may be an intelligence, a perseverance, a zeal shown in the mercenary pursuits of the worldly, and the nefarious pursuits of the vile, greater than are to be found

displayed by Christians in their high and holy vocation, and worthy to be placed before them for their most studious imitation. It is sufficient, therefore, for every purpose of the parable, if what is told us of this fortunate man, the discoverer of a hid treasure, corresponds with what takes place in the experience of the spiritual life; and of this there can be no doubt.

There is, first, the joy. Where Christ is found, there cannot but be joy. Those who find Him are marvellously enriched. They cannot want any good thing either for time or eternity. They have got what fully satisfies, what unspeakably delights, their souls. They have been brought to find in God their Father, Portion, and Friend; in Christ their Redeemer, Surety, and Advocate; in the Spirit their Comforter, Guide, and Helper; in the Word of God their rule of life; and in heaven their inheritance. It is no wonder that they rejoice, for the treasure which they have found contains all pardon, all peace, all grace, being no less than the whole fulness which is in Christ. This joy the world does not give the believer, and it cannot take it away from him. Deprive him of all earthly sources of joy, and pour into his soul all earthly sorrows, and this joy still remains to

him, to do more than compensate for the want of every other, and to make him, like St Paul, while "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

Then there is the hiding of the treasure again. This does not mean that one who comes to the knowledge of salvation selfishly keeps what he knows to himself, selfishly conceals what he knows from others. Surely no. From the very first the Christian feels himself a debtor to all men; from the very first he seeks to lead others to the Saviour he has himself found. His treasure has the strange peculiarity that it is not lessened, but increased, by being shared. In the kingdom of God the gain of one is the gain of all. To save a soul is to the happy agent thereof itself a rich treasure, a bright jewel for his crown of rejoicing.

There is, however, a wise and needful concealment, and there is a foolish and dangerous exposure. It is spiritually ruinous to lay bare our personal experiences of grace in any but the most cautious way, on any but the most solemn occasion. There is, accordingly, an excellent lesson for us in the re-hiding of the treasure; and never was the lesson fitted to be more useful than now, when, in a large section of the religious world, there is such a morbid craving for the preaching of experiences. A truly

healthy and earnest piety will ever refuse to rest short of God's own Word, and will resent with a holy indignation the intervention of human experiences between itself and that Word; but there is a diseased and sentimental piety widely spread among us to which the Word of God is not dear for its own sake, and which demands more highly-flavoured food than the pure wheat of divine truth. It is a sort of piety which has no warrant in Scripture, and which Scripture consents not to gratify. The apostles, for instance, in their discourses and epistles lay down the principles of the Gospel with all the fervour of conviction which the importance of these principles deserves, but they carefully avoid—or rather, I should say, their own manly natures make it impossible for them not to avoid—dwelling on their personal experiences. They preach the truth, never their experience of the truth; they preach Christ, never themselves. Paul, indeed, on two occasions, narrates the history of his conversion; but oh, how his way of doing so condemns those who go telling about theirs! This is what he does: he describes the outward miracle, which any one who pleased could satisfy himself concerning, and which was of great importance as an evidence for Christianity; how at mid-

day a light from heaven shone round about him—how he was struck down along with his companions —how a voice was heard, and what the words which that voice uttered were; and then all he has to say about his experience is, "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

It is as self-ruinous, however, that the parable teaches us to condemn the incautious exposure of the spiritual experience which the heart ought to keep to itself. And can we conceive anything more pernicious for a man who, after having been aroused out of a very immoral life, perhaps, to serious thoughts about God and eternity, through some severe mental struggle, goes forth minutely to describe what he has felt to all who will listen to him, to lay bare his heart to its depths under the derisive glance of some and the morbid gaze of others? Or, can we be otherwise than indignant at those who encourage him, by adulations in themselves hurtful even to a long-established piety, thus to exhibit what ought to be holiest and most hidden in him? Their tender mercies to that man are very cruel. Most seriously I would say to any one who means to set up as a Christian teacher on the very slender stock, at the best, of his personal ex-

periences, and to preach not out of the rich treasury of God's holy Word, carefully studied, but out of his own poor and narrow heart, where good and evil, truth and falsehood, lie side by side,—"Ah, brother! beware; thank God for what experiences of His grace He has given you, and be, on the whole, silent about them to men. Do not obtrude them on the notice of strangers—do not boast of them. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.' No one has ever tried that indiscriminate giving of what is holy in him to all and sundry—that scattering of the pearls even of a true spiritual experience, ignorant of where they may fall—without coming forth from the ordeal a fearfully rent and torn, maimed and mangled man."

There is, finally, the selling of all in order to obtain possession of the treasure. The discoverer of the hidden wealth sold all that he had in order to buy the field where it lay buried; and not otherwise must one who would make the kingdom of God his own, part with all that he has before counted gain unto him, whether worldly honours or worldly pleasures, self-interest or self-righteousness. He must esteem them all as dross in order to win

Christ. He must sacrifice *all*—not only something, not only what is dearest to him, but all, yea, his very self. His own will must be no longer his own, that the will of Christ may be in him; his reason must be subjected to the mind and Spirit of Christ; he must no longer think his own thoughts, nor do his own pleasure, nor seek his own glory, that Christ may be all in all.

The sacrifice is great — one not only hard, but impossible to human nature of itself. It is vain to hope for it from a mere sense of duty and mere strength of will; there must be a more powerful motive, a supernatural strength. Most instructively, therefore, are we told that it was for joy in his new-found treasure that its discoverer went and sold all that he had. It was that which made easy what would otherwise have been impossible. So the joy of the Lord is the strength of His people. The delight which flows from a personal discovery of the divine glory of His character, and a personal experience of the ineffable sweetness of His grace, enables them to bid a rejoicing farewell to whatever would prevent them enjoying the blessedness which is in Him. Oh that we might learn this holy secret of renouncing all for Christ, through laying our souls open to receive the joy which

cometh from the loving contemplation of His glory, and which manifested itself in victory over the world!

> "Oh that we our hearts might sever
> From earth's tempting vanities,
> Fixing them on Him for ever
> In whom all our fulness lies!"

His neighbours, I doubt not, when they saw the man we have been reading of selling everything he had, and buying a field about which they could discern nothing peculiarly valuable, thought him a fool, a madman; so, at least, do worldly men think those who sell all for the sake of the treasure which is in the Gospel of the grace of God. They can see nothing in it; they cannot understand the conduct of believers, and so set them down as fools, harmless fools, or dangerous fanatics. Well, time which tries all things will also try this. The event will prove who is right; it will prove who is wise and who is foolish; it will prove who has been buying and selling to most profit; it will prove who has been the most skilful and successful merchant. The wise men, with all their boasted shrewdness of dealing, will, I fear, then turn out to have been miserable fools, having lost their souls for very paltry gains. The so-called fools will turn out to have been alone wise, having gained, by the sur-

render of what was only as dross and dust in comparison, life everlasting, joy unspeakable. "If any among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." The Lord bless what has been said, and to His name be the glory, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON IX.

THE PEARL.

MATTHEW xiii. 45, 46.

THIS parable is obviously very similar in its general character to the one before it, which has already been studied by us, but it has most valuable lessons of its own. Marvellous as are the analogies or resemblances of nature to the kingdom of God, they have all limits beyond which they are inapplicable. Every object in the world around us tells us something about the world above us. Things on earth are shadows and types and signs of things in heaven. Visible nature is a book of symbols for faith to read; but no single symbol, type, or figure can say all—can show forth the whole truth—can present with suitableness the kingdom of God to our contemplation in every aspect. It was most consistent with our Lord's wisdom, therefore, to add parable to parable, so that one might supple-

ment another; and when we look at the parables in this chapter as composing a whole, and trace the links and lines of relation which bind them together—when we see how what has been defective in one is forthwith supplied by another—which gives prominence to the truths that have been omitted, —the mind of our Lord is revealed to us as of surpassing calmness and comprehensiveness, as entirely devoid of the narrowness which belongs to enthusiasts, as having present to itself the truth in all its many-sidedness, as going round it and sitting close to it, as the sea circles round the earth and fits into all its windings.

This parable of the pearl of great price and the previous parable of treasure hid in a field, have, then, certain common ideas or truths which we must mention, yet a very brief statement of which will be all that is necessary, as we have already had them more or less under our consideration; while the parable at present before us has also a teaching of its own, a purpose and lessons which are special, and which we must attend to more closely. May God guide us into the truth, and give it His own power to the good of our souls!

Both parables, then, teach us that the kingdom of God ought to be a personal as well as a general

possession—a thing of value for each individual man as well as a power in society. This is the truth which distinguishes them from the four parables which precede them. These four, as I have already explained, being spoken to the great multitudes of persons of all classes that, from the most varied motives, had gathered together to hear our Lord on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, described the kingdom of God as a force which works through society, which affects and influences the race. This, however, while a true, is but a partial, view of it. It has another aspect, which merits still more to be recognised. It is not merely a tree overshadowing the earth—not merely leaven leavening the world; it is also what each man must have for himself, what each man must make his own by a distinct act of will, by deliberate choice, by appropriation. This truth our Lord set before His own immediate disciples within the house, when the multitudes had dispersed, by the parables of the treasure and pearl.

The treasure, however great its value, could not enrich so long as it lay hidden beneath the surface of the soil. It had to be found, and after its discovery the finder had, by due diligence, and with the proper precautions, and through the sale of all

that he had, to get it completely into his own power and possession: then he was rich, but not till then. The pearl, vast as its price might be, could do no good to the merchant man so long as it was in the hands of another; he had to find it out, satisfy himself of its purity and worth, and give all that he had for it, ere it could be his; and only when his, was he made a wealthy man by it. So is it with the Gospel. It is not its mere existence that will profit us. We must know of it, must know what it is in itself and in relation to our wants, and must accept it on the conditions on which it is offered to us, although the fulfilment of these conditions may be very painful to the carnal nature, otherwise it cannot spiritually enrich and bless us.

This, then, is a question which both of these parables raise, and which we must not put hastily nor lightly away from us, Have we thus made a personal possession of the Gospel? Have we taken it home to ourselves? Have we received it as meant for us, as strength, peace, joy, salvation, not to men in general, but to us among others? It matters comparatively little how we find it, whether we stumble on it by accident, as it were, or discover it after deliberate search,—the great question is,

Have we found it? Are we living at present in the enjoyment of it? Is the treasure, the pearl, spoken of, really ours? Is Christ ours through faith and love? God grant that it may be so, but let us take heed, and not deceive ourselves on a point so momentous!

Secondly, The present, like the previous parable, sets the kingdom of God before us as most precious. There it is represented as a treasure, and here as a pearl; but the idea intended to be conveyed is in both cases the same. It is that the kingdom of God within us, that the dispensation of the grace of God towards us, is exceedingly glorious; that it is rich, and maketh rich. The pearl, when large, and free from the many defects to which it is liable, when of a goodly size and sort, is still a most costly gem; but in ancient times it was of far higher repute and value, and almost fabulous sums were given for pearls deemed perfect of their kind. This is the reason why the pearl is here made use of as a symbol of the kingdom of God,—the sole reason, I shall even venture to say. Some fancy, indeed, they discover other explanations in various properties of the pearl—in the snowy whiteness of its colour, the polish of its surface, the perfect roundness of its form, and also in the hazards and hard-

ships which must be incurred to obtain it from the depths of the sea; but all this is at the best merely to trifle, ingeniously perhaps, laboriously perhaps, still to trifle. These analogies are added to God's word, and not drawn from it. And as it is foolish and dangerous to abandon ourselves to the vague, uncertain, and wandering impulses of fancy, when it has cast off the restraints even of those rules of grammar which are the expression of the most essential laws of reason, I repeat, that it is only because of its value that the pearl is here employed as an emblem of the kingdom of God.

But most appropriate is the reason. The Gospel has brought into this world the only true wealth that is in it. Unsearchable are the riches of Christ. Unspeakable in value are the treasures of grace. Godliness is a great gain. If we have the Son of God, we have all that we need. All things, past, present, and to come—the world, life, and death, and the glory that is beyond,—all is ours, if we are Christ's. Those who receive through faith the blessings which the shedding of His most precious blood has procured, are rich with a wealth which satisfies all the wants of the soul—with a wealth which cannot be taken from them, and which they will not be compelled to leave when death removes

them from all that is earthly. Is this wealth ours? Do we esteem it at its true value? Do we count all things but as dross, if we may only win Christ? Or, are we of the number of those foolish ones, who have no sense of the relative value of the heavenly and the earthly, who prefer the most worthless of glittering baubles to the pearl of great price, who are wholly blind to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ? If so, let us be assured there is no ignorance so awful, no folly so ruinous as ours. From such delusion may God of His mercy deliver us!

There is a third truth which both parables alike teach. The man who came upon the treasure hid in a field sold all that he had, and bought the field. The merchant who found the one pearl of great price also sold all he had in order to purchase it. The selling of all for the precious object discovered is an essential feature in both cases. It is easy to perceive what it means, and that there is nothing in it inconsistent with the fact that salvation is of grace, not the reward of human merit, but the free gift of God. If any be alarmed at the mention of buying salvation, let them lay aside their fear, for it is groundless, since the buying which is meant is only that buying "without money and without price," recommended so persuasively by the prophet.

The buying must correspond to the selling. Well, what is this selling—the selling of all? It is, and can only be, the complete renunciation of all personal pretensions, the acknowledgment of our state of guilt and condemnation, the confession of our inability to save ourselves, the solemn abdication of our merits. This is the selling; and what, I ask, can the buying be, which proceeds on *this selling*? What but the entire resignation of ourselves to the true Author of our salvation? What but the acceptance of salvation, as indeed the free gift of Divine mercy? There can be no other buying where such is the selling. Since selling is the denial of all merit, buying cannot be the obtaining of anything by means of merit. If the two are to be compatible—if the one may exist along with the other—still more, if, as both parables represent them, the one be dependent on the other,—selling and buying must be understood as only those two inseparable exercises of a true and a living faith—the renunciation of our own power and righteousness, and the acceptance instead thereof of the power and righteousness of God which is through Christ.

Thus an honest interpretation here leads us to the conclusion, that salvation, instead of being merited by works of our own, is only to be obtained through

faith, renouncing self-righteousness, and embracing that which God offers. Yet mark, that while this selling and buying, this wise and sacred merchandise, does not imply but exclude merit in works, the only kind of faith which will answer to it is a living and operative faith, fruitful in sacrifices and good works. Some are so frightened lest they should fall into the error of "salvation through legal works," that they will not even conceive of faith as a work—no, not even as a work which renounces merit in all works, its own acts inclusive. Their dread of presenting the Gospel offer as less free than it is, is so great that they dislike to speak of it as having any conditions at all; and when they must admit faith at least to be a condition, they shrink from stating all that faith itself implies. Their favourite phrase is "faith alone," or its equivalent, "only believe." And I do not object to the phrase, which is a good and Scriptural one; but I do seriously object to its being constantly used without explanation, with studious absence of explanation.

Faith is not a single simple act. The whole soul concentrates itself in each act of true faith. There is knowledge, affection, and will in each act of true faith. "If any man mean by faith merely one of the several elements which Scripture warrants us to

include in faith, it is not true that, in his sense of the word, "faith alone" is the condition of salvation. It is what he calls faith, and all the other elements which he has omitted from the Scriptural notion of faith. No careful reader of the Gospels can have failed to notice that our Lord was very careful to set in a clear and strong light, before those who sought to be His disciples, the difficulties they would encounter. He guarded them most anxiously from the delusion of fancying that there were no sacrifices to be made. He described His service to them as one that, from the very outset, demanded the surrender of every thought and wish of their own. He thus turned back many who would have been well content to hear Him say, "Only believe," without any of those explanations which gave so stern an aspect to His claims. Why was this? Was it not adding something to faith as equally a condition of entrance into the kingdom of God? No, this self-denial was, most obviously, in our Lord's view, itself one of the elements of faith. If the faith did not involve a stripping off of the old man, at least so far as a sincere purpose and endeavour were concerned, it was in His eyes a dead and utterly worthless faith. Far be it from us to represent the Gospel offer as less free than it is, but far be it from

us no less to say that the strait gate is wide and the narrow way broad. No good can come of that. From such delusion also may God of His mercy deliver us!

These are the truths which the parable before us conveys in common with the parable which precedes it, and now I must mention those which are special to it. They are two. The first is, that the kingdom of God is here represented as found, in consequence of being sought. The pearl of great price is discovered by one who is in quest of goodly pearls, who has the purchase of them as his distinct aim, who travels from land to land with this very purpose.

It is not so with the finder of the hidden treasure. In his case there is no trace of deliberate design. The impression left by the account is, that he comes upon the wealth which had been hid without looking for it, without expecting it; that he stumbles upon it as it were by accident. And this is most faithfully descriptive of many who are brought to a knowledge of the excellency of Christ. He is found of them when they are not seeking Him. The light breaks in upon their darkness of a sudden. When they are giving themselves no thought about God, or a new life, or the hope of a blessed eternity, grace marvellously arrests them and, by a brief but

violent change, converts them from carnal into spiritual.

It is not a person of this sort whom our text describes. It sets before us not merely a finder, but a seeker of true wisdom; one who is not living for objects of mere sense—who has felt there must be some higher good for man than pleasure, or gain, or honour, which will satisfy nobler longings, and confer a truer and deeper blessedness; and who for this higher good restlessly seeks, urged on by the instincts of his own heart. It is not the Gospel, it is not Revelation in any form, which has raised the question, Is there not some object, some good, a supreme good, adequate to satisfy all the desires and wants of man? The heart raises this question of itself. It raised it before the Gospel was known; it raises it where the light of the Gospel has never reached. I might go back with you among the Greek schools of philosophy, and tell how one school after another sought to discover and explain the nature of the highest or chief good. I might go still farther back, and, by the help of what has of late been written about the systems of thought and belief in ancient China and India, show how the question had an all-absorbing interest for the wise men who lived and meditated there long before

European foot trode their shores. But no: I refrain. Their answers were worth but little, as every answer is, except God's own, and so we may leave "the dead to bury their dead." The fact, the most instructive and impressive fact, that these heathen sages, far apart from one another, knowing nothing of one another, in Greece, in India, and China, solemnly revolved in their hearts this truly most weighty question, "What is the Supreme Good?" is itself all we need to prove, that man raises it by the light of nature, although he can only solve it by the light of Revelation. The Gospel has come, not to start questions foreign to our natures, but to settle those with which our natures, by an inward necessity, tormented themselves incessantly, and yet in vain. It has come in the marvellous form of the God-man, "the desire of all nations," the object of all those longings of our race which arise out of the deeper wants of the soul, as made for God, for holiness, and eternal life.

Philosophers only, it may be objected, concerned themselves as to a Supreme Good. And certainly they only put to themselves consciously in a way at once general and definite these questions, Is there a supreme good? And what is it? But while it is the glory of the philosopher that he has clear know-

ledge where others have only vague feeling, yet he only has clearly what others have confusedly—is merely in advance of others on a path along which they also travel, but more slowly. That even a few should have discussed these questions as philosophers, is evidence that multitudes must have felt them as men. And indeed we cannot doubt that, wherever in heathen lands thought has been a little awakened and elevated, thousands have cherished aspirations after a higher happiness than earth can give them, and that many have done more than aspire—have devoted themselves to a lifelong search for it, never successful here below, but which will in nowise pass unrewarded.

Let us, however, leaving distant and heathen peoples, look at home. In a Christian country, the seekers for that which will truly satisfy the soul are greatly multiplied. There are many such among us. Would that there were more! Would that none rested in the gratification of earthly wants, and the gains of earthly business! The lowest degradation to which a man can sink, is to be satisfied with the bread alone which ministers to the sustenance of his natural life. That is to have the soul wholly dead. Wherever it liveth but a little, it must be conscious of cravings which the things of sense

and time cannot appease; and although it should go over the face of the whole earth seeking rest for itself, yet will it, like the dove of Noah, find none.

Alas for the man who starts not on this search, however long and laborious it may prove! and he who does so ought to have both perseverance and discernment—perseverance not to stop short until he is successful, and discernment not to be deceived by what is counterfeit or of little value. He ought to have perseverance. There is, as all experience shows, great danger that the searcher for the absolute good, for what will fully satisfy the whole soul, cease his exertions in weariness and disappointment ere he has been privileged to find. Many do so. They start well, and yet end ill, because courage and energy fail them. If they were to go but a little farther, all their aspirations would be abundantly fulfilled and all their toils richly rewarded; and yet, dismayed by the difficulties of the way, they lie down in the wilderness and die, or return to their old slavery and its miseries. Some advance so far that another onward step would make them happy for ever, and yet strangely halt and take not the one remaining decisive step. They rise to all that the world can give them of purest and best;

they rise to what is nearest to God, the true, the beautiful, and the good—science, art, and duty; but although they find that even these in themselves cannot respond to all the demands of their hearts, instead of raising their hearts still a little higher to Him in whom truth, beauty, and goodness have their one sole source, they foolishly force them to rest where they are, and to be satisfied with such contentment as is there possible. Instead of resolutely seeking a life as high as the most soaring aspirations of their hearts, they lower their hearts to the level of some more easily attainable life. Thus they become men of refinement and elevation of mind, of delicate tastes and liberal sympathies, seekers of truth and doers of good, and yet not Christians. They find "goodly pearls," but not "the pearl of great price." They come very near to the kingdom of heaven, but enter not in. They are "almost saved," and yet are "altogether lost."

Discernment is needed no less than perseverance. The merchant who traded in pearls required to be a cautious and sagacious man. He required to be always on his guard lest he should be imposed on, and to have a special skill to enable him to detect any flaw or fault which would lessen or destroy the value of the objects in which he dealt. A slight

yellowness of tinge, a slight roughness of surface, a slight want of roundness of form, was enough to render a pearl which would otherwise have been most costly almost worthless; and consequently one who bought and sold them required to have a mind trained to perceive at a glance the least of such defects. There is a similar sagacity necessary in those who seek the one true and absolute good of the soul, lest they should have what is meaner imposed on them in its stead. A dazzling crowd of goodly pearls is sure to be set before them as better than the one which is alone supremely precious. The world, first of all, puts what it has of best in competition with the Gospel. It offers its sciences and arts, its pleasures, its wealth, its fame, to win us to yield our hearts to itself, and forego all wishes for aught more worthy of us. And then, within the Church itself, a subtle imposture is practised. False Christs are created and set in opposition and rivalry to the true. Other gospels than that which our Saviour founded by His death and sealed by His resurrection are ingeniously invented and eloquently propagated, and many believe them to their ruin. From all quarters rise loud cries, Lo, here! and Lo, there! and he who would not be deceived has need earnestly to pray for a wise

and understanding heart. Let it be our unceasing prayer, therefore, that God would save us from all deception, enlighten and guide us, until Christ is wholly ours.

There is a second distinctive truth in the parable. All that the merchant sought for in many goodly pearls he found in one pearl of great price. He did not know this at the outset, but he was at length brought to know it. So it is not in many things that the heart can ever find rest, and that just because they are many. To have happiness we must have harmony, and to have harmony we must have unity. Sin produces misery through producing discord, and discord through setting now this and now that before us as our chief good. Christ counteracts its work by giving us back that internal unity which it takes away. He is the only object to which the various principles of our nature can go forth without conflicting with one another, wounding and injuring one another. Just as, when Christ is taken out of the Scriptures, revelation is a system no longer, has no pervading spirit or unity of life, but crumbles down, as it were, into fragments, so, when Christ is not in a man's life, it too falls into fragments; its different parts and principles act unconnectedly and in opposition to one another,

crushing and destroying one another, like some huge machine where the true moving power is inoperative, and every wheel is driven by an independent force. But in Christ all our powers find their natural end and aim, and around Him they fall into that due and harmonious subordination, whence necessarily, by the very laws of our moral constitution, results a calm like that of heaven, rest from the desires of the world and the passions of the flesh, peace and satisfaction.

And this fact, that there is one all-precious pearl, you will observe, not only secures unity to the inward, but also to the outward life. It is one; and therefore the problem of life, although seemingly complex, is really simple. It is one, and therefore we need to have only one aim. Yes, the Gospel confers on those who receive it this mighty advantage—it concentrates their energies on one point; it does away with desultoriness and inconstancy; it gives singleness of heart and mind, of desire and purpose. What boon can be more valuable? Hardly any achievement is impossible to one whose desires and faculties are all concentrated on a single object, who is ever ready to avail himself of what will help him towards it, and who permits no counteracting power to influence him. He has in such

concentration of mind and singleness of aim the great secret of success. It is so in worldly things. It is so no less in spiritual things. Have the eye single, and your whole body will be full of light. Be able to say, like St Paul, "This *one* thing I do," and, like his, your life will be noble, heroic, fruitful in great and good works. If you have the one thing, you will find it easy to deal aright with the many things. If not, you will be distracted, overpowered, and ruined by them. Have but one aim, and all works, words, and thoughts, afflictions and enjoyments, all providences and experiences whatsoever, will fall into order around it, and help you to realise it.

This aim, what ought it to be? It may be any one of these three,—self-gratification, self-culture, or self-consecration; and the whole character of our lives must depend on which of these it is. It may be self-gratification. Pleasure, wealth, influence, fame—mere outward things—may be what we seek, but no argument can be needed to prove that these things are beneath us, that for the rational spirit to make any of these its end is to degrade and debase itself. And especially unworthy must such idolatry be of every one whose vocation involves years spent in the acquisition of science and learning, in the

culture of thought and feeling.* The mind and heart of such a one should move in a region above the reach of the temptations which assail those less privileged in their callings. He certainly does no honour to the name of student who seeks knowledge only as a means to selfish gratification; who exerts himself in what measure he does only that he may not come to want, that he may pass through life pleasantly, that he may gain the respect of men and influence over them; and who, in fact, carries the narrowest spirit of trade into the most liberal of professions; yea, what is infinitely worse, who is not ashamed or afraid to carry the most worldly spirit into the most sacred of professions.

I cannot suppose, however, that the special danger of a student lies there. He must feel somewhat more indifferent to mere pleasure and gain than other men. This must rather, it is reasonable to think, be his danger—a belief that the culture of his own mind is the adequate aim and final end of his life; that it is enough if he can become a man of disciplined intellect, of fine taste, of wide sympathies. But no! The root of this life is still self, and what the Gospel demands of us is to get

* This sermon was preached before the students of the University of St Andrews, in St Leonard's Church, on Sabbath, 16th April 1865.

rid of self. If in the strength of self and for the sake of self we cultivate ourselves, our reasons, our imaginations, our feelings, we may undoubtedly so far succeed as to make ourselves able and accomplished men, but never will we make ourselves Christians. No self-culture will do that. Self-culture is what the wisdom of this world recommends; but "self-sacrifice," which is very different, is what the wisdom of God enjoins. To die to self altogether; to use our own will merely for acquiescence in God's will; to hold our whole possessions, time, and talents as means whereby to do His work in the world; to offer our all of existence, without reservation of one thought or feeling, as a gift to Him,—that, and that alone, if the Gospel be true, is the great duty and end of life.

It may seem to you an impracticable one. And, certainly, it is impossible for any man of himself and to himself to sacrifice himself. To deny myself in order to please myself, to yield up my will in order to show the strength of my will, if not direct contradiction, is at least vain caprice. A true act of self-sacrifice is only possible through a power not our own, and it involves the yielding up of our own self to another self. But the Gospel offers us both the power by which and the self to which we may

yield ourselves up as a holy oblation. It offers us the power of the Holy Ghost. It unveils to us God in Christ. Now, His love, if sincerely received, will suffice to accomplish in us the sacrifice that is requisite. Let us but see the love of God as it is, and the willingness to offer ourselves "body and soul" must, according to the laws of our nature, arise in us. Let us but find the one all-precious pearl, and that discovery will of itself enable us to part with all, to sell all that is needful to secure it.

Let this, then, my dear friends, be the great lesson of our whole discourse, a lesson specially appropriate to this day—that we die unto ourselves, but rise with our risen Lord to a new life, a holy life, a life in God and to God. And oh! let this life be earnest. Whatsoever of good our hearts find to do, let us do it with all our might. Let us hear God speaking to us in His solemn providences. Let us hear His monitions in our own saddened hearts. And let us work while it is called day, for the night cometh when no man can work.

SERMON X.

THE NET.

MATTHEW xiii. 47-50.

THE marvellous group of parables contained in this chapter is here completed; the series of seven is brought to a worthy close. The very position of the parable we have now to consider may guide us to its meaning. It bears considerable resemblance to another parable in the group, the second in order, that of the wheat and tares; and some have been led in consequence to regard it as identical in aim with that parable, a repetition of the same truths under a new form, with no special reference of its own. But this opinion will not bear serious reflection. If there be, as there undoubtedly is, order in the series up to this point, it cannot abruptly cease here. Assume even, untenable as the theory is, that our Lord did not speak these parables in connection, that Matthew collected and

arranged them, still it is impossible to conceive that he should have shown so much skill on the whole, and yet have so awkwardly placed seventh what should have been third.

Nor is it difficult to perceive a very real difference between the parable of the wheat and tares and this of the net. The central thought, the leading design of the one, is essentially distinct from that of the other. The aim of the parable of the wheat and tares is to fix attention on the fact that throughout the history of the kingdom of God true and false professors intermingle—grow together as wheat and tares in the same field; and the separation of them at the last day is mentioned only in subordination to this, only to warn men not themselves rashly to attempt the separation, but to bear as best they may with this perplexing intergrowth of wheat and tares, of believers and hypocrites. Here it is quite otherwise. The primary thought becomes secondary, and the subordinate one the principal. The inevitable separation is now brought into prominence as the chief and concluding idea. Christ has disclosed to us in this series of seven parables—each wonderful in itself, but the whole, above all, wonderful from the relation of its parts to one another—the origin, the reverses, the ad-

vances, the nature of the influence, the laws of progress, the glory and worth of His kingdom; and now most naturally, in this the last of these similitudes, He represents to us what is to take place at the close of its entire history, even the final separation of the good and evil, which final separation is accordingly here the central and dominant truth.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net." Here our English version is much more general and vague than the original, and than it is desirable to be. What Christ really says is, that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a "drag-net," or "hawling-net;" like unto one of those large nets which may embrace almost the whole compass of a bay, which may enclose a wide space of sea, and suffer nothing to escape from its meshes. Its width, its comprehensiveness of sweep is, we can scarcely doubt, an essential fact in the comparison. The kingdom of heaven is like such a net, just because it, too, can seize and hold everything far and wide around it, because it is comprehensive enough to enfold within it all the varieties of our race. We have here, in fact, a statement, or rather a prophecy, of a characteristic of the Gospel which signally distinguishes it from every other form which religion has assumed on earth. The Divine economy revealed through

Moses was avowedly no more than preparatory, temporary, and local. And all other religious systems, Christianity alone excepted, whatever may have been the claims which they have advanced, have borne many a mark of their unfitness for universal empire. They have grown out of the conditions and circumstances of a particular nation and age, and have had limits both of time and space which they could not transcend. The stamp of locality and the germs of decay may be seen in them all. It is not to man as man, to man in every variety of circumstance and stage of culture, that they address themselves, but only to man as the subject of peculiarities which have resulted from the operation of physical and moral causes within some limited area. States of society arise which they have not anticipated, modes of thought and feeling which the principles they inculcate cannot guide, and thus they are inevitably outgrown and exhausted.

The founders of the false religions which have exerted great power in the world have never, perhaps, been mere impostors, exclusively personal and selfish in their aims; but, on the contrary, men of the largest mould of mind, and animated with the energy of the deepest thoughts in the generation

around them, so that they could speak and act with an intenser conviction than other men. It has been not through selfishness and imposture, but through being more than others in sympathy with the most powerful principles of their age, and becoming the organs of these principles, that they have moved and moulded millions of their fellows. But no individual can have a genius as vast as human nature itself—can so rise above all the limits of time and space—of country, class, and culture—above all that is peculiar around him and individual within him, as to devise a system which shall meet and satisfy all the wants of man wherever he is, whatever his condition, and at whatever time in the world's history his lot may have been cast, which shall have an expansive power absolutely inexhaustible, through an adaptation to the requirements of each successive generation absolutely perfect. That, no mere man has ever done, or ever can do; that, one man only has done, the man Christ Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith, He who spoke this parable.

His Gospel proves His divinity by the universality of its message and saving efficacy. Only He who made man could so comprehend man; only He could give man a religion equally suitable in every

conceivable condition of his history and being. And such a religion the Gospel is. Go with it where you please, and everywhere it will be felt to fill a void; everywhere it will prove itself the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation; everywhere it will renew the life, and purify and exalt the character. The negro savage will find in it the satisfaction of those wants which have driven him to incantations, and bowed him down before stocks and stones. The Hindoo Brahmin, lost in the tangled mazes of error, will find in it an answer to those doubts which have made his life a torment. The sorrowful will receive from it comfort; the feeble, strength; the loftiest intelligence, light and rest. Let civilisation progress as it may, it will always find the Gospel in advance of it, attracting it onwards, and shedding light on the path to be traversed. It is indeed like unto a net, a most capacious net, one not to be cast into some single stream only, into some particular lake only, but into the great and wide sea of the whole world, and with which that sea may be searched and swept of all that is within it.

But, of course, it matters not how comprehensive the Gospel is, unless it be published abroad; it matters not how vast and sweeping the net is unless

it be "cast." If it be allowed to lie on the dry land instead of being employed in the sea, there will assuredly be nothing caught. And this casting of the net is the work left for us to do, for all who name the name of Christ to do, in their several stations and according to their several abilities. The net itself has been made for us by infinite wisdom, and put into our hands by infinite grace. All that we have to do is to help in throwing it, in working with it. This God has intrusted to us, and He will perform no miracles to take the responsibility off our shoulders, but call us to account if we do not our task faithfully and assiduously as "good fishers of men." We need not all go forth as preachers; we need not all do the very same thing; but as in the management of a large drag-net some row, some cast, some pull, some beat the waters, and thereby all contribute to the securing of the prey, the filling of the net, so we ought each to bear our share and do our part in the great work of bringing men under the dominion of Jesus Christ. There is no man, whatever his sphere of life and labour, who cannot by word and deed do something to spread abroad the knowledge and the love of Christ; who cannot do something to extend the bounds of the kingdom of righteousness; and any

man who does what he can towards this, in the position where God has placed him, is a fellow-worker with all Christian men—a fellow-worker with God Himself, in the great and holy occupation of fishing for men with the net of the Gospel, of saving souls through the faith of Jesus Christ.

My brethren, shall we not begin? We need not leave off our ordinary employments; we need not go far before we come to the sea where the net can be cast; we need not, as some must, go far out to sea, where the winds blow hard, where the waves roll high, where the storm rages, where life is in danger. We need not, I say, as some must, leave our sweet homes and quiet lives, and go where the great and restless sea of fallen humanity is covered with thickest darkness and lashed into fury by tempests. Here, where we are placed—here, in this parish—we have a calm and sheltered bay of the great sea. Here, at our very door, is a space where the sky is serene and the water smooth for us to ply the net of the Gospel in, helping one another. There is not much necessity that I know of for more than there are to preach the Gospel among us. There is necessity for all of us who love the Lord Jesus to be actively occupied. Little good will the services of the sanctuary do if they be not

followed up on the part of those who have joined in them by an endeavour to work the truths communicated thoroughly into their own hearts and lives, to train up their children in the love and practice of them, and to win their neighbours to a hearty reception of them both in belief and conduct. There are very ignorant persons both young and old in this parish, and there are others who have knowledge enough to instruct them. There are very careless persons who neglect all the concerns of eternity, who scarcely ever come within the hearing of God's word, and to whom a pious neighbour might be of great use. There are persons whose standard of life is miserably low, and who can only be made ashamed of it by having a nobler one kept constantly before their eyes by those who are no more happily circumstanced than themselves. So that even in a quiet place like this, where God's Gospel has been spread abroad so freely and so long—even in a calm bay like this, running in from the great ocean and protected from its storms—not one individual in whose heart the love of God is can be spared from the net, or excused for refusing to bear a share in casting it.

The net of the kingdom of heaven when cast into the sea "gathered," we read, "of every kind." The

Gospel lays hold of wise and unwise, learned and unlearned, old and young, rich and poor, bond and free, men and women. Persons of every diversity of colour and country, condition and character, have it preached unto them, and find in it what attracts them. It gathers them together out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. As the great drag-net of God, it works through the whole sea, and brings up whatever comes in its way. God has the sea itself in the hollow of His hand; He has all its winds and waves, every current, every eddy, every movement under His control, and He guides them all to the drawing of His net through the waters, and to the filling of it. His great design towards man is that all the scattered members of the human family may be gathered into one under the government of His Son, may live in righteousness, love, and peace; and all the phases of history, all the revolutions of empires—the whole series of events—have been arranged and ordered with reference to this end, this gracious and glorious purpose.

The net becomes at length full, the entire sea is searched and swept—all whose names are written in the book of life are enclosed. When God sees the net thus full, with His own strong hand, and with

the hands of all who have wrought along with Him, He draws it in. When the fulness of the gentiles is come, and the Jews are called, and God is risen up from the mercy-seat, and the summer is over, and the end of the world is arrived, the net of the Gospel shall be brought to land, and never cast into the sea any more, for there shall be no more sea like that in which it has till then been employed.

Then follows the examination of what it has caught, the sifting and separation of its contents. This is needful, for it gathers together in its passage through the sea much that is bad as well as what is good—the vile along with the precious. They are not all Israel who are of Israel. The mere fact of enclosure within the Gospel net will be of little avail. A profession of Christianity and communion with the outward Church will secure to no man salvation. Nothing except real goodness, such as faith in Christ and the influence of the Holy Spirit alone impart, will pass in the day of final judgment and separation.

The Gospel differs from all false religions in that it represents the final judgment as one of unerring justice; one every sentence of which is pronounced in righteousness; one which assigns blessedness to goodness only, wrath to wickedness only, and which

strictly proportions the blessedness to the degree of goodness, and the wrath to the degree of wickedness. All religions have assumed that there is some kind of life beyond the present. Absolute disbelief in the immortality of the soul is as rare as absolute disbelief in the existence of a God. But it may well be questioned if the conviction has had in heathen society much of the moral efficacy commonly ascribed to it. Simply in itself—apart from any belief in retribution, in reward and punishment—it is difficult to discover what virtue it can have. And if a future state be thought of as one where good and evil are allotted on other principles than those of justice, then must it be a power not favourable but antagonistic to morality—tending not to check, diminish, and destroy the disorders of the world, but to confirm, perpetuate, and multiply them. Far from vindicating God's moral government, it makes vindication impossible by proclaiming the continuance in the future life of all those moral anomalies which cause perplexity in this present life. Now, whether or not the doctrine of a future state has ever in any religion of human invention been taught in connection with the doctrine of a final judgment in righteousness, is a question of fact; and I venture to answer, it never

has, except in the loosest and slightest way. In the ruder heathen views of a future state there are hardly any moral elements whatever. In the religions of Greece and Rome the world to come was never conceived of as a state of moral reward and punishment for the mass of mankind. There was happiness for a few favourites of the gods, and misery for a few signally profane and heinous enemies of the gods; but for the majority of people the future world was a shadowy, unsubstantial, ghostly state, morally unconnected with the earthly life. In systems where eternal rewards and punishments properly so called have a place, the acts supposed to involve them are not really moral acts, but the performance or violation of positive, arbitrary injunctions. To touch a particular object or eat a particular kind of food is held to incur eternal penalties, when the grossest licentiousness is regarded as without danger, if not profitable, to the soul. The faith we profess—the religion of the Bible—on the contrary, makes its whole disclosure of a future life centre in the fact that it will be decided by an absolutely perfect moral judgment, which will cover the whole life of every man, and into the light of which every feeling, every counsel of the heart, every hidden thing, every word and

work, will be brought. While the New Testament speaks in almost every page of a future state, it condescends to tell us nothing that could merely gratify curiosity; but the sum and substance of all its reiterated teaching is the awful practical truth, "God will render to every man according to his works: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

Those who examine the net do so carefully and deliberately, sit down to do so, select all that they find to be good, and gather them into vessels, and only cast away what they find unfit to be kept. This fact, that the separation of the good and evil is to be careful and deliberate, is most fully taught us, and our Lord's anxiety to teach it is most clearly to be recognised, when we compare this account given of the separation of the good and bad fishes gathered together by the net of the Gospel, and that of the wheat and tares permitted to grow together in the same field until the harvest. Here it is the good fishes which are represented as first carefully chosen and placed in vessels, and then the bad are spoken

of in general terms as "cast away;" but there this part of the representation is reversed—it is the tares that are commanded to be first gathered together, and bound up into bundles and burnt, while the merely general command is regarding the wheat, that it be gathered into the barn. The two parables together teach us, as their common lesson, that the whole work of separation will be a most strict, impartial, and minute one; that it will most certainly not be confusedly hurried over in any part of it; that each evil person and each good one will find his true place—that each evil man will be put in the right bundle fitted for destruction, and that each good man will be put in the proper vessel destined for glory.

There are many who fancy that faith in Christ's work frees from the necessity of submitting to a strict and righteous judgment; that for Christians the last day will not be one of judgment, or at least that the whole judgment, so far as they are concerned, will turn on the single fact of their conversion. But this is a most false and pernicious way of thinking, opposing the most formidable obstacle to the moral action of what Scripture calls "the powers of the world to come." The Gospel is no device to enable men to avoid the final judgment,

but a means to enable them to be righteously acquitted. Christians will have their every thought, feeling, and act judged of, no less than the most reprobate sinners, and the sentence will be as these have been. God will give to every man, saint and sinner, Christian and worldling, according to his works. Of what kind you sow, of that kind you will reap. In what measure you sow, after that measure you will reap. The final judgment will proceed on a standard graduated to a most perfect moral adjustment. Each man will have his own heaven or hell. Nor can it be otherwise, since each man carries the elements of his own heaven or hell within him; since the glory which a righteous man will have is but the natural outcome of the grace he has had, and the retribution of the transgressor is engendered from his own pride, perversity, and remorse. The individualities of virtue determine the varieties of reward, and those of vice kindle the varieties of punishment.

There is one point where the comparison in the parable does not hold good. Those who cast the net of the Gospel are not those who are to separate the good from the bad. This last is not a work which men are able to do, which men may dare to attempt to do. God will do it by the intervention

of other servants. "At the end of the world the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just." While the kingdom of heaven is being established, while the net is being cast into the wide and troublous sea of time, deep as is their interest in its success, they are kept back, are not permitted to interfere for its advancement; but when time ends, when the close of human history arrives, then God sends them forth to execute His will, to accomplish a service in which man is no longer an agent, but the subject.

And they do it. They sever the wicked from among the just, and cast these wicked ones "into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." These words tell us that the ungodly are reserved for some terrible, inconceivable, irretrievable doom. True, these words, and all similar words in Scripture, are metaphorical. They are not to be taken literally. They seek by material imagery to convey an idea of what is spiritual, and cannot be directly described. But they are not untrue, are not even exaggerated. Sin is that abominable thing which, unless we repent of it, and turn from it to holiness, will produce an anguish and despair that cannot be exaggerated. It will work the loss of all pleasure for ever, and the gain

of intensest woe for ever. Oh! let us fear it and flee from it. Fools only make a mock of it. May our prayer be that God would give us such hatred of it, and such love to Himself, that we may seriously endeavour to keep all His holy commandments, and may finally obtain those blessed promises which surpass all that the human mind can understand or the human heart desire. And may He grant us a gracious answer to our prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XI.

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP.

"Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's."—MATT. xxii. 21.

IT is very desirable that we should understand correctly where and how the preaching of the Gospel touches the sphere of politics; and it fortunately happens that the truth as to this, like all truth, which is extremely useful, and which concerns, in one way or another, persons of every rank in society and every degree of culture, is not far from any of us—is indeed very near to us, and very plain and obvious. What that truth is a few sentences may, I hope, suffice to show.

The Gospel is certainly not a mere system or creed of politics. It is not one with politics. Prodigious as this error is, it has been committed. All who have paid any attention to the history of what is called Socialism are aware how common among the advocates of the opinions comprehended under

that name has been the disingenuous artifice of endeavouring, under the cover of professions of the profoundest reverence to the Saviour of the world, to reduce Him to the rank of a mere social reformer —to reduce Him to their own low level. These men—some of them of European celebrity—have dared to affirm that the Gospel, as it came from the lips of our Lord, consisted exclusively of a few simple practical truths, designed and adapted to be the seeds of a fruitful harvest of social welfare throughout the future of the human race; and that all about it, as it has come down to us, which refers to the direct personal relationship of the soul to its God, to its Redeemer, to the Holy Spirit, to heaven, to hell, never entered into the thought of Christ, but has been added by popular superstition and priestly invention, and ought to be torn away.

I have called this a disingenuous artifice; and so it is. In the name of the Gospel, it destroys the Gospel. Under the cover of religion, it gets rid of all religion. Like Judas, it betrays the Son of God to crucifixion with a kiss, only it is to the crucifixion, not of His body, but of His character. It is a device without the least foundation either in reason or fact. There is not a single particle of evidence for the existence of the socialistic Christ. A

Christ who taught that God was to be regarded before man, that the soul was more than the body, that eternal and spiritual wants were more urgent than temporal and social ones—such is the only Christ history tells of. He came to set us right towards God, and said very little about our relations to Cæsar and society, being aware that the man whose heart is right towards God will be right also towards every creature and ordinance of God. He died on the cross as the author of an eternal salvation, and not as the discoverer of a political panacea. Those truths which refer to our direct personal relationship to God—the very truths which have been so foolishly pronounced to be the products of craft and credulity—have an infinite value, independent of any bearing which they may have on the life that now is; and yet, in these truths, all the moral and social power of the Gospel is concentrated—its power to quicken and leaven, to pervade and transform, to bless and beautify every phase of human nature here below. No: the Gospel and politics are not identical—not synonymous. The Gospel, I fear, would be a poor substitute for politics; and, oh! I am quite certain that politics would be a most miserable substitute for the Gospel.

The Gospel is not only no mere political system, but it does not even *contain* a political system. This is, in fact, one essential feature of distinction between it and the economy which preceded it. That economy comprehended a political constitution for the Jewish nation, as well as a religion. It was the inseparable interweaving of the civil and sacred—if, indeed, we can speak of the civil in such a case—which constituted the theocracy. The Gospel has come free from all the restrictions which made the Mosaic dispensation fit only for a single people at a particular stage of civilisation, and acted upon by special influences. It has been committed to no political system; and it is precisely because thus unfettered and independent that it can enter into alliance with any form of government which endeavours to fulfil the ends for which government has been ordained of God. It has nothing to do with political problems as they are in themselves—nothing to do with them for their own sakes. All *mere* political discussion carried on under the name of the Gospel ignores an essential characteristic of the Gospel—ignores its deliberate exclusion of all political articles or dogmas from among the truths it teaches.

The Gospel, then, is not a system of politics, and

does not even contain a system of politics. It cannot, however, be without some relation to politics, and what the relation is, is manifest. The Gospel is meant to sanctify man's life in every form it can assume. It is meant to pervade law and government with its own spirit, and so to improve—yea, to perfect them. The kingdoms of this world are intended to become what they ought to be—the kingdoms of our Lord. They are intended to be conducted on Christian principles, and to be directed towards Christian ends; and every man who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity will seek to contribute by his prayers, example, and efforts, as far as he can, towards this happy issue. He cannot feel that he has no relation to the powers that be; he cannot feel that it is a matter of religious indifference to him how they act, or how he acts towards them.

Here arises an apparent difficulty. The Gospel, although it deals not with political problems in themselves, contains principles which all political doctrines and measures are bound to take account of and conform to. May not the preacher of the Gospel, it will be asked, by following out, or at least professing to follow out, these principles into their more remote application, drag any theme of politics within

the range of his discourses? Yes! but not otherwise than he may any theme of science, art, or commerce. Yes! but not if he have any adequate sense of what is expedient. The principles of the Gospel are designed to pervade, embrace, and direct the whole life of man, and hence it is indeed true that no absolute limits can be fixed beyond which the preacher may not carry the application of what he teaches. He cannot submit to be debarred by human authority from any region of thought, art, or energy. If you say to him, "this is business," "this is science," "this is politics," "this is not within your province," he can easily set aside your feeble "thus far," with the reply, "My province is as wide as my Master's; what you speak of is either moral or the reverse, Christian or unchristian, and where these distinctions are I recognise no others."

It does not follow, however, that because the preacher of the Gospel refuses to recognise the obligation of arbitrary outward restraints, he may cast aside real internal restraints—those of prudence. Guided by these, he will rarely think of drawing out the principles he inculcates to their more special or remote applications. While aware, for instance, that the principles of the Gospel ought to determine every political and commercial measure, he will be

aware, also, that where there is doubt about the right or wrong of any such measure, the difference of opinion which exists almost always arises, not from wilful rejection of some principle of the Gospel, but from misconception as to the facts on which the application of it depends. It arises, in other words, almost always from a source as to which his judgment can scarcely be expected to have much weight. Occasions are conceivable where he cannot consistently with fidelity merely enforce, in a general way, piety, truth, and justice, but must particularise what takes place within the family circle, in the shop, on the exchange, or in the senate, as contrary to these virtues; but certainly these occasions are exceptional—very exceptional, perhaps, in a country like ours, where a serious immorality in any department of social life is likely to be speedily detected and exposed by those whom special studies have entitled to speak with authority, and to be listened to with deference.

I have made these remarks, partly for their own sake, and partly because I wish to-day to act on them, by endeavouring, from the words of my text, to state in a general, a very general way, some of the many things we owe to Cæsar—that is, to the government of the country. Our Lord was careful

to define the position which His followers ought to maintain towards the civil authorities; and His apostles, Peter and Paul, while rigidly abstaining from criticism of the measures of the wicked despotism which they were under, both earnestly enjoined reverence for, and obedience to, the constituted authorities—submission to the king as supreme, and to the magistracy as an ordinance of God for the execution of eternal justice, which punishes evil and rewards good. They did so all the more anxiously on account of the rebellious spirit of the Jews, which might easily communicate itself to the Jewish Christians, particularly under so tyrannical an administration as that of Nero. They did so all the more anxiously, I believe, because afraid that the person should be confounded with the office, and the king despised because the man was despicable, whereas the office remained divine and sacred whatever the holder of it might be.

It is none the less necessary that we should reflect on our responsibilities, as citizens of the great nation in which God has graciously cast our lot, because we happen to be private and obscure persons, engaged each of us in our own business, and without any direct or manifest influence on the laws, acts, or fortunes of the nation. It is none the

less, but perhaps the more necessary, because on this very account we are the more apt to forget we are related to the state at all—the more apt to forget that any civil responsibilities lie upon us, or any civil ties bind us to the community as a whole. It ill becomes us to forget this, for there is not one among us who does not receive great and precious benefits through his connection with the government of the realm. Our quiet, the safety of our persons and property, our work and wages, our freedom of speech, our liberty to worship God according to the dictates of conscience—all these, and countless other advantages, are secured to us by its power, preserved and protected by the might and majesty of the laws. The industry of the labourer, the skill of the artisan, the enterprise of the merchant, the hardiness of the sailor, the valour of the soldier, and the wisdom of the statesman, the sweet fancies of the poet, and the abstruse researches of the philosopher, talents, virtues, and graces—all these, under that happy constitution which our fathers, having bought and sealed and consecrated it even with their blood, have handed down to us, work together for good to the humble villager in the remotest hamlet, and contribute sooner or later somewhat to bless and beautify his life, although he may not know whence or how it

comes. Responsibility is always in proportion to privilege. Where much is given, there much is required.

The citizens of a country are members one of another, and are closely related to the powers that govern them. I hope that, amidst the rejoicings of the past week, this thought has been present to us. If not, if these rejoicings have mainly grown out of the desire of a holiday, or local rivalry, or other similarly frivolous motive, if they have not grown out of a feeling of that national unity which is represented for us in the reigning family, and of gratitude for the blessings we enjoy through our citizenship, through our being members or parts of the most marvellous society which exists on the face of the earth, then these rejoicings have indeed been silly in the extreme. It will not, therefore, be inappropriate to try to connect serious ideas with what has taken place by solemnly recalling to mind our civil responsibilities.

"Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." These are words of wide application. They give expression to a comprehensive principle. They were originally spoken, as you perceive, with reference to payment of tribute to the Roman Emperor. They enjoin, however, no less than the rendering to the supreme civil authority in any nation all that it is

entitled to. No one need be so foolish as to fancy that he fulfils them by merely contributing to the revenue of the nation as far as it is compulsory for him to do so. The nation has a right to much else from us than a little money. It has a right to our interest in its welfare—to our intelligent appreciation of its acts—to our obedience—to our affection for its rulers—to our prayers.

First, The nation has a right to our interest in its welfare. It is natural and almost inevitable that we should love the land of our birth, of our forefathers, and of the famous memories which we have been taught from infancy to cherish. He who does not must be wanting in some of the essential feelings of our common humanity, or have done violence to some of its primitive instincts. It is in perfect accordance with the will of God that we should possess this love. He desires that our country should be dear to us. He demands only that our love should be purged from ignorance, so as to be no blind instinct such as makes the wild beast defend its forest or mountain lair; and purged from selfishness, so as to manifest itself, not in contempt and enmity towards strangers, but in readiness to make whatever sacrifices the good of our own countrymen calls for.

It is only when the love of country is thus enlightened and disinterested that it is worthy of the name of patriotism. Then it is a most admirable and excellent affection. It is in the state what brotherly love is in the Church—so binding the various individuals of the community together into a single body, that "whatever one member suffer, all the others suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the others rejoice with it." This obligation which is upon us to love the land of our birth and those who inherit it, and to take a lively interest in their prosperity, does not in the least imply that there is to be any neglect of private duties through interference with public affairs. It is a grievous misfortune both for individuals themselves and the public where that occurs. It is a sure symptom that the body politic is in a diseased and dangerous condition when the masses of the community become engrossed in political agitation. Patriotism is very rarely the cause of such commotion. It is when the sacred name of patriotism is profaned to ignoble purposes, when under the pretence of patriotism men carry on a mean scramble for personal advantages, or class arrays itself in hatred and hostility to class,—it is then that private duties are forgotten or despised, that individuals start up as teachers on

subjects the very elements of which they have never learned, that the peace of society is endangered, and its progress impeded. A true interest in our country's welfare, a pure and honest patriotism, is never the source of these excesses. What is true of the charity which Paul eulogises is true of it. It is, in fact, that same charity in a different sphere, and modified accordingly. It vaunts not itself; it is not easily provoked; it seeks not its own. It, in other words, carefully conforms to all the conditions on which the harmony and happiness of a nation depend.

Secondly, The nation, or the government of a nation, has a right to an intelligent appreciation of its acts. This is one of the things which we ought to render to Cæsar, and a very important one it is. Ignorance among a people is a terrible national calamity. It renders them an easy tool in the hands of the fanatic and impostor for the achievement of mischief and ruin. Where the masses of a community are enveloped in gross mental darkness, there is no guarantee that they will not crouch in very adoration before a despotism, however hateful, which flatters their prejudices, and none that they will not raise their arms in tumultuous rebellion against a government, however wise, if it thwart

some foolish, or even perhaps wicked, passion. There cannot, indeed, be a really good government where there are not intelligent subjects. There must be a certain adaptation of the constitution of the government to the character of the governed. Mild and benevolent laws, for instance, through their intrinsic merits, will be unfit for a rude and reckless people. The very excellence which they have in themselves will be a fatal defect. It is only on intelligence that a good government can be based; and even if it were possible that it could be built up on any other foundation, it could not stand for any lengthened period.

There is no country where the intelligent appreciation of national transactions is so much called for as our own, because there is none where public opinion has so powerful an influence. Now, what is this public opinion which carries all before it? It is not the opinion of the wisest or best of men—of those who are superior to their fellows in genius, talent, or application. No; these men may, to a greater or less extent, lead public opinion by originating ideas which eventually take possession of the popular mind and become common; but it is not until they have done so that they are elements of public opinion—and it is rarely until they have

done so that they exert any political influence. Public opinion is the opinion of people in general, of ordinary people, of obscure people. All of us contribute to its formation. Whether it shall be true or false, right or wrong, Christian or unchristian, depends in some measure on each one of those who help to constitute that public which entertains it, and to which it owes its almost irresistible power. In this way the wisdom and the folly of even the humblest tell upon the prosperity, the destiny, of the nation. It may matter very little into what error the thoughtless writer of a newspaper article falls, provided his error remain an individual opinion; but if thousands of still more thoughtless persons, who will neither judge for themselves nor yet keep silent when they have no right to speak, repeat his error as a truth, it matters a great deal. It becomes truly dangerous. Let us therefore beware. Let us contribute to public opinion only independent and well-considered decisions. Let us abstain from rash praise, and still more from rash blame. Thus shall we "render unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's."

Thirdly, Obedience ought to be rendered. The apostles have enjoined us to do so in a manner so earnest and emphatic, that it was long a prevalent

dogma that this obedience had virtually no limits, no measure—that in no circumstances could resistance be justifiable. The dogma of "the divine right of kings," as it was called, was maintained in a revolting and debasing form. And as presented it was a mere fiction. God has placed kings and other magistrates in authority to promote public happiness, to carry out public justice; but He has given them no other divine authority, and that, instead of being a justification of arbitrary and oppressive government, is the strongest condemnation of it. Cæsar has no right to put himself in the place of God. It is at our peril if we obey him at the expense of God. When the temporal authority commands what is contrary to the divine will, irreligious and immoral, or even when it violates the general rights and honour of the body politic, it comes into conflict with itself, and with the law to which it, as well as the humblest citizen, owes allegiance. It ceases to be God's minister. It loses all right to regard. Still, resistance is the last desperate resource, and allowable only when all other means of redress have been exhausted. Governments must be arbitrary and oppressive indeed, before force is to be thought of, before the voice may be lifted to call citizen to arm against citizen.

The direct demands which the well-ordered government of this realm makes upon our obedience are so few, and light, and just, that it would be inexcusable indeed if they were not cheerfully responded to. It has come, in fact, to be the case, that instead of troublesome personal services being exacted from us as in former times, the highest and almost the only service we can now render to our country is to prosecute, each one of us in his several place and relations, the private pursuits he is engaged in quietly, diligently, justly, piously. A sober, righteous, godly life—that is now the whole substance of what is asked from us. That which secures our own temporal and eternal welfare contributes most also to the strength of the nation, to the happiness of the community.

Fourthly, The nation has a right to our affection for its rulers. A nation is in a condition hopelessly bad when its members are isolated in their aims and sentiments, and unable to identify themselves with it, to feel themselves belonging to it, bone of its bone, flesh of its flesh, inheriting its glories and disgraces, and bound to take a part in fulfilling its duties and advancing its welfare. Now, I hesitate not to say that the consciousness of a common life, of common interests, of common

obligations, will be more powerfully and widely diffused by affection to a ruler or reigning family than by almost any other thing. Such affection is itself a mighty national benefit—a mighty national force—life, strength, safety to a people. Cool calculations as to what is for the good of a whole commonwealth are much beyond the abilities of most persons. A constitution, a system of laws and administration, is too abstract, too cold and dead a thing in itself, to be the chief source of national feeling and action. But affection for a person or family is a feeling which finds easy entrance into all breasts, and which, when its objects are worthy, is among the purest and most elevated that can be cherished.

If sovereigns and princes display goodness, their subjects will in general readily acknowledge and admire it, and love them for it. Men are even too prone, too apt, to love those who are placed on the very pinnacle of worldly greatness. But this love, where not abused, where advantage is not taken of it by ambitious rulers to aggrandise themselves and enslave others, is as the very sap of life circulating through the whole body politic. It is, in fact, perhaps the strongest reason against a state being presided over by rulers whose term of office expires in

a brief period of years, that by such an arrangement the principle of affection to persons is not brought into efficient action. And this objection, while frequently overlooked, will be despised only by those political theorists who forget that the majority of the human race are swayed far more by their affections than by their reason; that many men, and more women, in whom it is most important, both for their own sakes and for the sake of others, that the sentiment of nationality should be kept alive and strong, never reason on national questions—never try to do it, and could not intelligently or to profit do it even if they were to try.

This, then, is in itself the very highest service that sovereigns and princes can render to the nations over which God has placed them, to make themselves and their families beloved. If they do so even by what may be deemed very negative virtues, even by a somewhat passive gentleness, by abstinence from wrong, by goodness of private character merely, still, in the simple circumstance that they have united in their own persons the affections of their subjects, they have conferred on them a boon of richer value than all the mere gain or renown of the most brilliant achievements and the most useful enactments. They have brought the hearts of men

into a harmony of affection, awakened and confirmed the love of country and the regard for authority, and so given solidity and strength to their dominions. Alas! that rulers should have so frequently forgotten this, and deemed it needful to attempt or accomplish great things, and set the world in agitation, when to have cultivated the love of their people in all the quietness and peace possible in their station, would have not only been a career exempt from hazard, but a thousand times more advantageous than their most famous exploits. If any proof were needed of a truth so accordant with reason, it would be found in the history of the present reigning family of these realms, and in the prosperity enjoyed by us under its mild and peaceful sway, which has been beautified with so many private and domestic virtues. The years of the reign of Queen Victoria have been the happiest and most prosperous in our country's annals; they have rendered the throne broad-based upon the people's will, deep-rooted in the people's affections, and given industry, art, science, virtue, and religion, freest scope to grow and spread themselves, without any other restrictions imposed upon them than those involved in their own natures, and in the nature of man. Affection and reverence for our Queen and

her family are most necessary feelings, yet it is not necessary that I, or any one else, should labour to enforce them. They are a tribute, I believe, universally paid.

Finally, The nation has a right to our prayers. The Lord reigneth. He doeth according to His will among the armies of heaven and among the children of men. He raiseth up and pulleth down, according as it seemeth good to Him. The issues of prosperity and adversity are in His hands. Therefore, prayer will avail much. The earnest prayer of the true Christian at least will avail much. For the Lord who is seated on the throne of the universe is none other than the Saviour of Christians—than that Jesus who was born at Bethlehem, and who died on Calvary—than that Jesus whom they know so well, and with whom their intercessions are so powerful. As we love our rulers, therefore, let us pray for them. For our Queen, let us pray that, amidst all the burdens of government and the sorrows of widowhood, she may be comforted and supported by the love of her subjects, the happiness of her children, and, above all, by the presence of her God, and the strong consolations of the Gospel; that she may long reign over us in peace and righteousness, and, finally, receive that crown of glory which fadeth

not away. For the heir to the throne, whose auspicious marriage has called forth so universal and sincere an expression of loyalty and affection, let our prayer be, that he, with his consort, may have much happiness and little sorrow; that all the promise of his youth may be more than fulfilled; that all the temptations of our common humanity, and those special to his age and exalted position, may be overcome by him through grace from on high; and that when he is called, in the providence of God, to ascend the throne of his ancestors, he may conspicuously manifest that wisdom which has made the memory of his departed father revered and imperishable; and that his court may be as pure, his life as serene, the good he works his people as lasting, and the claims to reverence which meet in him as numerous, as have been those of his royal mother. For all in authority, let us pray that they may have the spirit of wisdom and judgment, and faithfully discharge the responsibilities of their offices, while we, under them, giving them all due respect, may lead quiet and peaceable lives, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. For our country, our native land, which so many associations have endeared and hallowed to our hearts, let us pray that God would be pleased to bless and

prosper it, at home and abroad, in the persons of all classes, and in all its interests. Especially let us implore that it may be made wholly the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that at His name every knee among us may bow, and every heart among us leap for joy. May ours ever be the aspiration, the petition, which the sublimest of our poets has clothed in prose language so worthy:—"Come forth out of Thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the Kings of the Earth! put on the visible robes of Thy Imperial Majesty, take up that unlimited sceptre which Thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed Thee; for now the voice of Thy bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed!" Amen.

SERMON XII.

THE DUTY OF DIVINITY STUDENTS.

"Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing."—LUKE xii. 43.

THE teaching of Scripture sometimes wonderfully transcends in all the attributes of truth what are considered the very highest results of modern wisdom. There are, perhaps, few more instructive instances of its doing so than that which is brought to light on a comparison, or a contrast, of the view of human life and duty which pervades the Bible with that presented in contemporary writings on the Science of Education. If you will examine any recent book on that subject, of a general and elaborate nature, this is what you will, almost certainly, find. It begins, very justly, with an attempt to determine what is the governing principle of all education, what is its final aim, its grand ambition? That question it shows, with equal justice, must be

resolved into this other one, What is the chief end, the true destination, of man on the earth? A review, more or less rapid, is then given of the various attempts which have been made by famous thinkers of former ages to answer this question, and, by means of an answer, to establish a theory of education. It is pointed out how erroneous the views of Plato and others of the ancients were in supposing the adequate end of education to be the formation of citizens;—thus sacrificing humanity to the State. It is pointed out how no less defective and unworthy was the principle of greatest happiness so generally insisted upon at the close of last century and during the early part of the present one. It is pointed out how Locke and others have been equally mistaken when they would resolve all education into moral discipline, and would define its essential aim to be a training of the conscience. When this labour of destruction has been completed, it becomes necessary to build up a theory in the room of those which have been, one after another, thrown down. But it so happens that there is a more general agreement among recent writers on education, as to the theory which ought to be adopted, than there is, perhaps, on any other point of a speculative nature. There is, in fact, no variance, no dissent.

The unanimity is unbroken. Examine any recent English, French, or German treatises upon education, and you will find in all of them one and the same theory advocated. It is, that the highest end of education is the harmonious development of all the faculties of man, the simultaneous and gradual exercise of all the dispositions which, together, constitute humanity. It lays down, as its first practical inference, that man's chief duty is to promote this symmetrical and progressive perfection of his nature.

Now, there is manifestly an immense amount of truth in this view of man's being and end. There is manifestly much more truth in it than in any of the other theories which it has displaced. Its distinctive principle, that there is required for every man a mental training, the foundation of which lies deeper than profession, social position, &c.,—a training which will lay hold of him simply and exclusively as a man, and evolve all the essential principles of his manhood,—is an exceedingly precious principle.* Still, I am convinced that whoever is led to suspect even this theory, and, in consequence, to give it a serious examination, will soon discover that it also is, in several respects,

* See Appendix, Note A.

very faulty. Its point of view is thoroughly bad. It makes man far too much an end unto himself. The person who acts on it is not likely to be very humble-minded. It is not probable that he will realise his dependence on a high, and mighty, and holy One. But as this humility, this sense of dependence, lies at the very foundation of all genuine greatness of character, I am afraid that those who, instead of being profoundly penetrated with the feeling that God has given them all their faculties in order to do His work with them, can deliberately set about making themselves grand specimens of human nature, will not bring themselves to much perfection by all their efforts. The most perfect embodiment of the theory, perhaps, that ever existed, was the great German poet, Goethe. He may be taken for the most perfect specimen of man, or as of the highest class of men, by those who please to do so. I would prefer a very different type,—one constructed on principles essentially different. Setting altogether aside, however, this objection to the theory of harmonious development, there is another which is absolutely fatal to it. It is a theory which gives no place nor sanction to special or professional education. It ought, on the contrary, to denounce it in every form it can assume.

If it be the true theory, then all professional life is immoral. Professional education, there can be no doubt, must and does destroy the equilibrium of man's powers. It is just a special training to enable a man to perform particular acts and exercises of body or mind with rapidity and success—to obey some particular set of relationships. It is perfectly impossible to be a professional man and yet have no aptitude for work of one sort more than another. It is a contradiction in terms. Now, the theory is self-condemned which would, even in the way of natural consequence, lay its prohibition or interdict upon professional life. The whole business of the world is carried on by it. Progress is made only because men set themselves to follow out special pursuits. The man of science, the scholar, the artist, the man of business, of trade, of labour, must, if they are to be workmen that will not need to be ashamed, voluntarily sacrifice general harmony of character—must retrench, exclude, and concentrate, in order to obtain increase of power within the definite but comparatively contracted sphere of life which they may have chosen.* If our modern theory, however, be thus erroneous, where lies the primary falsehood of it? It lies, I say, in departing

* See Appendix, Note B.

from the great idea which pervades the parable from which we have taken our text, and which so pervades the whole Bible that no reasonable doubt can be entertained by any attentive reader of it, that, if the scriptural view of life is to be adopted by us, this idea, and not the modern one which has been substituted for it, must be at the foundation of our characters. It lies in substituting the notion of *development* for that of *responsibility*, the notion of *culture* for that of *service*. Thinking to honour education, we begin by giving culture a place it is not entitled to, and then we find that, because we have assigned to it a primary position instead of a secondary, we must really do dishonour to education itself, and even land ourselves in the inference that professional life is necessarily a violation of our nature and a denial of the true end of our existence —that, about it, there can be nothing divine or holy—that it must even be essentially immoral. But we land ourselves in this only by abandoning the conception of human life which the Scripture gives us. If we look upon man as standing in relations which God demands obedience to—as having his chief end out of himself—as being a servant, and having, in his various faculties, so many means or instruments of service—a steward, and having in

all the endowments of the soul within him, as well as in all outward advantages, so many gifts intrusted to him to distribute aright,—we shall fall into no such absurdity, and shall be able to see a divine sanction for the whole of life, and not merely for a part of it. The wisdom of Scripture thus wondrously transcends, on this great question, the highest result reached by contemporary thought. It alone shows us the true way of looking at ourselves. It alone puts first what ought to be first. It insists on regarding men as, at all times, and under all circumstances, and in all relations, a subject, a servant, bound to live not to himself but to the glory of God; bound to work as ever under the eye of his Almighty Master. Every precept of Scripture proceeds on the supposition that responsibility for service should be the deepest feeling of our heart, even as fidelity of service must be the highest and completest praise. We utterly discard the teaching of Scripture, we abandon entirely its spirit, when we make culture displace service, or even include it, instead of comprehending culture under service. Service, life not to ourselves but to God, that, believe me, my hearers, is not only the noblest and holiest thought that can possess man's heart, but the most comprehensive also, and indeed

is the noblest and holiest only because the most comprehensive. It is by including all—every faculty and every act—body and soul, thought, feeling, and deed, general culture and special, justice and benevolence, worship and business, that it sanctifies all. Displace it from its rightful position of honour and supremacy, and some portion of life will be robbed of the sacredness due to it. The theory of education we have ventured to condemn does so, and the professions and all special training for them are made, by inference, immoral. Replace the idea in a true theory, and it will be found that it is a part of the service obligatory upon every man to train his nature as a whole. If we wish to render to God all the glory we can—to do the most work for Him that our powers will admit of—to lead the noblest, sublimest, loveliest, most useful life in dependence upon Him—to struggle to the uttermost, to strain every nerve and exert every faculty in order that His will may be done by us, be assured that the general culture of our nature will not be neglected, however much of special concentration there may be. Oh, my friends, that we were conscious of our responsibility to God, of our obligation to serve Him with soul and body to the utmost of our ability! Oh that we could humbly and earnestly

take this thought, that our life ought to be, from beginning to end, labour in the divine service, home to our minds! I am certain that we would find in it unfailing strength. He who has it, has his foot upon the immovable rock. Life, in its reality and meaning, has been revealed to him. His aim is fixed, and his path marked out. He who has it not is a drifting wreck. He is at the mercy of every wind and wave. Darkness and the deep abyss must engulf him.

It would be easy and perhaps not unprofitable, to show what is implied in this conception of life, and what rules of practical guidance it would yield, applicable to persons of every class, and quite irrespective of anything special in their calling and circumstances. I do not wish at present, however, to treat the subject so generally. I wish to avail myself of this opportunity, which God has given me, in order to speak to students, and to students who propose to enter the Church; I wish to take the thought of service, and to make special application of it to their case; I wish to state to them what I think they, as students, have to do in God's field of duty—how they will be able most successfully to serve Him—how they may so labour as to obtain His blessing on their labours, as to have His "Well

done, good and faithful servant," pronounced on the entire course of the period of their studies. May the power of God accompany the feeble words of man, and make them useful to you!

The first matter which a student, like every one else, has to settle with himself is, whether he has made a right choice of a profession? whether he is willingly accepting God's guidance of him, or taking a way of his own? God will guide every man who will submit to His guidance. The consequences of refusing to follow his guidance are always most disastrous. There is no servant of His whom He has not a place for; and whatever the place He assigns to the servant is, it is the one he will be best in, and do most in. The true view of life and education, which we have said pervades Scripture, here sheds the clearest light upon us. It gives us a moral basis for every profession. It shows that there is *a divine call* to each one of them. If man be a servant of God, bound to do his highest and best in His service, he is bound to act in that way in which his action will be most efficient. God has made one man for one thing, and another for another. He has given them, as elements of their original constitution, special aptitudes. In the very first dawn of the rational and spiritual consciousness, inequalities of

genius and power and diversities of tendency manifest themselves. And God has a meaning in these inequalities and diversities. They are intimations of His will about us, and tell us plainly to take that place in society where we shall be able to serve God with these special aptitudes. This is a point on which all men ought to come to a decision, but a student for the ministry most of all, because the consequences of a mistake will in no case be so grievous as in his—so grievous both to himself and to others. And, in coming to a decision, two questions must occupy his most solemn and prayerful attention.

The first is, Have I those qualities which constitute a Christian? The fear and the love of God, a desire for His glory, zeal in His service;—you must ask yourselves if you have these, the very essentials of the Christian life. If you have not, then, of course, you are where you ought not to be. You cannot ask God to bless your studies, for your whole college course is an insult to God—your whole university life is a falsehood. Before you can hope to serve Him in any measure as a student, you must be a believer in Jesus Christ, and know what it is to be led of the Holy Spirit. I do not say that you ought to be holier than other men. That is not a

way of speaking which I approve of. No man has a right to say to you or me, "You are a minister, you are a student of divinity, therefore you ought to be holier than I." To that we might justly say, "We all ought to be as holy as we ever possibly can; we all, clergy and laity alike, student of divinity and student of medicine, ought to give ourselves *wholly up* to do the Lord's will. Christ died for all of us, and has sent His Spirit to all of us, in order that all of us might be perfectly holy—perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect." It shows almost as bad a spirit when a man says to his neighbour, "You ought to be holier than I am," as it does when he says, "I am holier than you are." But this I shall venture to say, that if either you who are preparing for the ministry, or we who are in the ministry, are destitute of all true Christian principles, then I am afraid that we shall be greater hypocrites than other men—that we shall carry about with us a falsehood that will wholly ruin every germ of possible good in us. Therefore I say that it becomes you, as in God's sight, to examine most searchingly and prayerfully, with a view to determine the question I have mentioned, into your spiritual state.*

* See Appendix, Note C.

The second question for each one of you is, Have *I* the peculiar qualities required in the ministry? It does not follow that if a man be a Christian, he may, on that ground alone, study for the ministry, and undertake its duties if he please. He must seriously debate with himself, and, as in God's sight, determine whether God has given him the intellectual and other endowments demanded in the discharge of its functions. He must ask himself whether God has not so constituted him as to show that He designed him to serve Him in some other capacity. He must, in other words, decide with himself whether he has got "a divine call" to the ministry or not. When I say "a divine call to the ministry," I hope you understand me. God forbid that I should ever even seem to use, or lead you to use, that expression as some men do, which is in a way absolutely sickening to every healthy mind. I mean that a man has a divine call to any office or place, when, in the honest and conscientious application of his reason to all the circumstances of the case, he perceives that in that office or place he can do most for God's glory; that it is in accordance with God's will that he should take that particular step in life, that he should assume that office or go to that place. There is something very solemn in a

divine call, but there is nothing mystical in it, and a belief in it implies no pretence to any special revelation which raises a man above the necessity of giving reasons for what he does, and very frequently makes God's own Spirit the cloak of human covetousness. Using the expression, then, in its true sense, I say you cannot see to it too anxiously that you have such "a divine call." There are many persons under the influence of a superstition, which arises from mere want of spiritual insight, that the man who has once commenced to study for the ministry, and then, on further examination and additional experience, finding his mind better adapted for grappling with another set of questions than those which are theological, and his talents practical in another direction than that of the ministry, bravely cuts short, as he ought, the course on which he has entered, and follows out another, has (according to the expression, ignorantly and wickedly misapplied as referring to such a case) "put his hand to the plough and looked back." A grosser superstition there cannot be. It is no looking back, nor turning back, to leave where God tells you He does not want you, and to follow where He summons you. Is the ministry the only holy profession? The man who says so is no better than an

atheist. He robs God of His right over by far the larger portion of life. He limits His presence and power until no man can think of such a God as the true and living God. Be not deceived, my friends; he that doeth righteousness is righteous. He that doeth the work God gives him—that work, whatever it is, instead of work which his own self-will would prefer—he only will be held a good and faithful servant.*

I suppose, then, that this preliminary matter you conscientiously settle, and that in your present position you are consciously in the path of duty. If so, the principal way in which you can serve God, that in which you can do most for Christ and for Christ's cause, is a religious attention to the duties of your studentship, zeal in the work of preparation for life. It would be my advice to young men, in every position and of every profession, that at their period of life the duty of cultivating their minds is the most urgent of duties; that it has a claim on them which all the destitution and degradation that may be around them will not justify their throwing off and leaving unresponded to. If any young man, after faithfully meeting the demands of his employment, find time for visiting the poor

* See Appendix, Note D.

and needy, but no time for serious, earnest, private study, then I say that, however much his motives may be to be respected, he is acting in a way which wisdom must condemn. It is not common to forget that charity and duty begin at home, but he is doing so, and must retrace his steps. Whatever any young man can do, over and above the occupations of his business, he ought to include in it some course of study, some plan of mental discipline, which he should deliberately choose, faithfully keep to, and perseveringly follow out. Thereby he will grow in spiritual manhood, and be able eventually to do among his fellow-men far more for God than he can rationally hope to do by entering on the work of dealing with others before having acquired knowledge and discernment to guide and sustain his zeal. The very business of students, however, is study; and supposing always that a man has a right to look forward to the ministry at all—that is, supposing him to have piety and the requisite aptitudes—the first duty of that man as a student is hard study. For nothing else and on no pretence may that be neglected. By nothing else can he do so much service to God. And never, my friends, has God called any generation of students more urgently and solemnly to earnestness in study than He is

now calling you. There are troubles ahead of us, storm and conflict looming in the distance; and our clergy, more than in any former period of the world's history, would require to have worked hard as students to be able to play with heavy weapons, and to look any kind of infidelity, heresy, or hostile criticism calmly in the face. Never was there an age more difficult for them to quit themselves like men in. They would, indeed, require to be heavily and completely armed. It is a fact which there is no disputing, that in time past the same energy of intellect has not been applied by us to theological science which has insured such progress to the physical sciences. The most rudimentary conception of there being either science or progress in theology has not, in general, entered into the minds even of those who professed to teach it. "Theology is unlike all other science," I have heard it said; "it is unprogressive; it is all in the Bible, and God makes no more additions to it now." And many people have said this, and it is printed in books, and multitudes believe it. But you might just as well say, "There can be no progress in science. It is all in the creation, and God has for a very long time ceased to make any additions to *it*." The Bible is no more theology than the world

is science. Revelation is neither to be compared nor contrasted with science. Revelation corresponds not to science but to nature. It is not science but a source of science, and it is an inexhaustible source of science.* To aver the contrary, to teach that it is already exhausted, that all its truths are embodied in any system raised by human industry and genius however great, must, it seems to me, not only discourage its students, but thrown dishonour on its Author. So far from theology being perfect as a science, I am convinced that as a science it has scarcely begun to be cultivated. In those systems which pretend to embody it, there is an arrangement of topics, but there is no method, and without method there can be no science.† It is now not a matter merely of honour and credit that we get out of this condition; it is a matter of necessity. Our opponents have made it so, and I thank them for it. It is only by a deeper philosophy, truer conceptions on history, and a wider scholarship, that we can meet their attacks and defend even vital truths. If it be incumbent upon us earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, it is incumbent upon us to spend our student days and nights in laborious toil. We

* See Appendix, Note E. † *Ibid.*, Note F.

must do so, not to gain credit to ourselves or to secure approbation from teachers. We must do so because that is work which God tells us very plainly; in the signs of the times, He wishes to be done by us, and to be done with all our might.

But apart from every consideration of this sort, I would have you to remember, that in proposing to become clergymen, you aim at becoming the religious guides of men, which nothing but a superior knowledge of religious matters will enable you to be. If the clergy do not know much more about religion than the laity—if they have not gone deeper into the study of the Gospel—if they have not wider and broader and more solidly-established views—if they cannot tell men on rational grounds, On this point you are right, on that other point you are wrong,—what do they mean? What right have they to pretend to be teachers? A minister's duty in preaching is not merely the utterance of certain pious commonplaces, in a form that people will be pleased with. It is not merely telling them what they know already. If it were, there is perhaps no office or function that would require less exertion of intellect and less labour of preparation. But it is a much nobler office than that would make it to be. It is really and strictly to instruct men, and

to lead them into ever-deepening views of the grandest truths. I have no belief in anything doing good but the truth. The truth may, indeed, be delivered, and yet the power of the Spirit not accompany it and make it work a saving change. But it is quite absurd to expect that the Spirit will bless error, or even superficial second-hand views of Christian truth. The preaching of the Gospel is indeed, in the world's opinion, foolishness, but God never sent fools to preach the Gospel—never sent men mentally weak nor ill-instructed to do so. Injustice is done to His word of Revelation, when it is expounded by men unfitted to arrive at the exact precise truth of what is written; and the application of the truth, no less than the ascertainment of it, requires a clear and disciplined mind, not to be had without honest study in youth. The man who would declare God's message "in wisdom" must not merely present Gospel truth, but the very Gospel truth called for by the circumstances in which the persons addressed are, and by the characters which they are known to bear. He must always set before himself in a clear way a definite aim. He must say, "There is a prejudice in the minds of these people, which I have to try to dispel; a sin working in their hearts which I have

to try to root out; a grace or virtue which I have to try to persuade them to pray for and to practise;" and he will find that sound, earnest, real thinking will alone lead him to his object; that God will bless solid reasons, and will not bless empty words. There are many things regarding this which I should desire with my whole heart to speak to you on, but time forbids. I hope enough has been said to make you feel that you can in no way serve God and the Church of Christ so much as by the most zealous devotedness to your studies. They are above everything else God's work for you. Do not trifle with them, but count them sacred. Remember that to study is what God has given you at present to do, and perhaps it will give you a sense of worship most favourable to success in study, even when you are turning over the pages of a Greek or Hebrew lexicon.

I have already stated that every student looking forward to the ministry ought to possess the qualities which constitute a Christian; that the possession of these ought to precede his studentship. I must remark now that the very fact that a student's life ought to call forth that intensity of intellectual exertion which I have insisted that it does, must require him to be specially attentive to the spiritual

state and condition of his soul. Intellectual labour is still more engrossing and exhausting than bodily labour. It is more difficult to maintain a fervent spirit zealous in Christ's service when the mind is strained in the pursuit of truth, than it is even in the midst of the most urgent secular business. It is, therefore, a most important question for you—How the student is to guard against the danger which threatens him from this quarter, and to obtain those supplies of spiritual strength and life which are necessary to sanctify his studies, and to keep the flame of devotion burning with ever-increasing intensity in his heart? How the acquisitions of the intellect are to be made to feed this flame and not to stifle it? I would reply to this most important practical question—*First,* he must set apart a portion of his time for the performance of duties strictly religious —for prayer, meditation, reading of the Bible, and of works of healthy piety; and this portion of his time he must jealously consecrate to the purpose for which he originally designed it, to the bringing of his mind into direct devotional contact with divine things. *Secondly,* he must sanctify his studies by special prayer. It is surely no less necessary to ask God's blessing on the food of our souls than on the food of our bodies. If we realise

aright our dependence upon Him who is the source of all truth, we shall, when we sit down to any task of intellect, ask Him to guide us into the truth; and, as certainly, the consequence of our asking will not only be a gracious answer, but, in addition, a deepened sense of dependence. And, *Thirdly*, he must cherish a practical sympathy in those who need his help. He should, I think, were it only for the sake of his own spiritual health, were it only to preserve equilibrium in his soul between intellect and emotion, have some poor family to visit, and some class in a Sabbath-school to take charge of. God has furnished our hearts with instinctive sympathies for the ignorant and the wretched; and if, on any pretence, we refuse to listen to the promptings of these instinctive sympathies, our whole character will become perverted, our violated affections will take a terrible revenge upon us.*

I desire now to speak very briefly regarding the missionary service which God demands from you. There can be no need of any general advocacy of the cause of missions before you: in fact, I do not understand what can be meant by advocating the cause of missions to any who call themselves Christians. "Advocating missions" — why, that just

* See Appendix, Note G.

means advocating Christianity. The Church is, in its very essence, a missionary society. One and the same command is our warrant for missionary exertions and for a Church at all. Whenever a Church forgets its essentially missionary character, it ceases to be a Church—it ceases to have any claim to existence—it merely cumbers the ground. Every Christian ought to be a missionary. Every true Christian is a missionary, and the amount of his missionary exertion is the measure of his Christian spirit. It is impossible for a man to have the faith of Christ in his own soul without trying to spread it. It is one of the great principles by which God governs the world—a principle which fills me with ever-increasing admiration—that the desire of proselytising should be inseparably attached to the conviction of truth. Whether the desire shall be powerful or feeble depends, of course, on the weakness or strength of the conviction.

If we hold the truth with a slight grasp—if we have it as a mere tradition or speculation—if a suspicion of our being, after all, in error, pervade our conviction, we will endure little in the effort to convey it to others. But let us be thoroughly mastered by any truth—thoroughly seized and possessed by it—and we shall find it impossible to help giving utter

ance to it. If the truth be really in us, it will use us as its instruments. We shall find that we have got no choice in the matter. When a man can begin coolly to deliberate whether he will defend and propagate his Creed or not, he can have got no firm belief in it. Faith in truth is far gone when, instead of feeling yourselves impelled as by an irresistible instinct to proclaim it and make it obeyed on earth, you sit down and calculate its advantages and disadvantages; the good and the evil; the gain and the loss of it. Let a man but have faith in truth; let him see it with his own eye and love it with his own heart, instead of merely receiving it by traditional assent, a kind of inherited acquiescence, and the truth will richly reward him for it. It will make him a hero; yes, though he be constitutionally timid it will make him brave and strong—it will confer on him the glory of an apostleship, and send him forth as its missionary.

In the very fact of knowing a truth, we have a Divine call to spread that truth. People often say, "No; we must look at the consequences first. It may be dangerous to speak the truth just now; wait until the world grows ripe for it." And so God's truth remains unspoken. This has ever seemed to me to show a lamentable want of faith

in the Divine wisdom. Can we conceive God sending ideas into His world before they were really needed, or giving a man convictions before He intended him to act upon them? He has sent them, of course, before the world in general wanted them. Truth has always a hard struggle before it gets error expelled, and often it is a long struggle. We have not inherited from our forefathers a single great principle which has not had its martyrs. Before truth will grow in this wicked world the ground must be bedewed with the sweat and tears and blood of the best and bravest of the human race. Wickliffe, and Savonarola, and Huss, and hundreds of others, had to serve as the very fuel of the flame at which the torch of Reformation was lighted; that torch which, held high in the hands of Luther, has diffused illumination over so many centuries and so many generations of men.

But that God sends ideas into the world before He needs them, and before He intends us to suffer and struggle for them, that I dare not think, and that I see no evidence of. On the contrary, I feel confident that from history itself we might prove that God protects us evermore from premature ideas; that we could prove that truth has been revealed only at the proper time for it; and on that

we would venture to raise a new argument for God's existence which would hold good against the atheist. We ought to have confidence in God's wisdom, then, and boldly spread what truth we know; and we will undoubtedly do so if the truth have really a strong grasp on us. They alone *believe* who feel the necessity of translating, come what may, into *acts*, that which they profess to be the truth.

By our thus stating the matter you will see how proselytism must follow on conviction, even when the conviction is of a new truth—one that has dawned on our minds for the first time—one that is unknown, untried in the world. How much more must it follow on the conviction of the truths of the Gospel—those truths on which we know life and death to depend, and which have been tested in every way and proved to be unspeakably precious by the experience of so many generations! The obligation to missionary exertion, therefore, lies upon all. But it must be different for each man; it must be different for each class of men. What is it for you who are studying for the ministry? What is your duty in connection with missions, home and foreign?

It is, perhaps, to listen to and obey God's call to

prepare yourselves to go forth to a foreign land and labour among the heathen. I would not venture to say to any one of you individually, Go. I would not venture to become the interpreter of God's call to any one of you. Interpret it each one of you for himself. What God says to any individual can be so clear to no one as to that individual himself. What God says to any one of us, He seldom allows any one to hear but ourselves. All that I venture to urge is, hear what God says to you, whatever it be; and, like brave men, do it, whatever it be.

It does not seem to me that it can be on the whole a wise thing for students to engage directly in mission work, to any considerable extent, until very nearly the close of their university curriculum. There has been nothing of that kind, hitherto, in connection with Aberdeen; but there may be some of you inclined voluntarily to undertake more mission work, and at an earlier stage than is at all desirable. In Glasgow the evil effects of prematurely entering on the mission field are frequently exhibited. It is not a very uncommon thing there for students to be regularly salaried missionaries, and so to have a large amount of compulsory missionary labour from a very early period, indeed, of their university course. It is obvious that the con-

sequences of this must be bad. Men cannot effectively follow two pursuits at once. The work of the university must, in circumstances like these, suffer —must remain altogether undone, or be superficially done. It is impossible that any ordinary man can undergo the toil and distraction of several hours' visiting from house to house, where he comes into the presence of one scene of misery, sickness, and crime, after another, can prepare for meetings and address them, and not neglect hard, earnest reading and thinking. All that I have said to you on behalf of severe study, may be turned into an argument against your undertaking mission work, except near the close of the period of your preparation for the ministry. It may also be justly urged, that those who neglect this counsel will almost inevitably form careless ways, both of thinking about religion and of communicating it. The discipline will infallibly enable them to extemporise; but it will, with scarcely less certainty, make them extemporise in that rough, loose manner which destroys the very sense of truth and accuracy, not only as to expression, but as to thought itself. It will form a habit destructive of the very faculty of thinking aright, which is a much more lamentable result still than even the sacrifice of what is, however, the very

highest quality of spoken utterance, compression, or rather force gained thereby. It may, finally, be urged that it is spiritually injurious for a man to enter early on such work,—that it tends to destroy the solemnity of it for the whole future life, and to make it ordinary and professional. I think this might be expanded to be the weightiest argument of all. While, however, these reasons are conclusive for the purpose for which we have brought them forward, it seems, on the other hand, obvious that students of divinity, about the close of their course of studies, would then do well, if they find it possible, to enter on missionary work in thorough earnest. Even a short time so spent would furnish them with invaluable experience, and make the commencement of ministerial life less difficult and discouraging than it generally is. It is a question for the Church to consider, whether she can do anything towards providing such a discipline for her students. If she can, she ought. She must plead guilty to having shown very little concern about either her students or her licentiates—the very parties in whom she ought to take the deepest interest, because most needing to have their interests secured, while wholly unable, by their position, to vindicate their own claims.

What we are mainly to look for from the members of a university is, then, not direct missionary work. It is the maintenance and diffusion among themselves of missionary zeal. It is this which gives to an association like that in connection with which we have met to-night—to a University Missionary Association—its importance. Your Association is important because you are important—because you must, in the years to come, exert a great power upon society. The direct influence of such an association may be small, but its indirect influence will be felt, and that not feebly, throughout our whole land, and in the most distant parts of the world, by its effect on the thoughts and feelings of the successive generations of students who enter into and issue from the university in which it is. With this feeling, I commend it and you to the Divine blessing.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work. Amen.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

I FIND, in a manuscript Essay of mine, this principle illustrated so as to give a general idea of its value and of the immense extent of its sphere of application. I shall make from that Essay a lengthened extract, which will at least, I hope, show that if I have assigned to the principle of harmonious development merely a subordinate place, it is not because I have formed a less comprehensive view of its bearings than those who make it supreme.

"A man ought to act not merely in obedience to some particular set of relations but in obedience to all the relations under which he has been placed by the ordinance of the Creator revealed in his constitution. This is a simple matter of strict morality—not at all a matter of choice. If a man resolve to conform only to one particular set of relations, he may do so, no physical impossibilities will be cast in his way; but an arbitrary and consequently immoral act of his own cannot free him from other obligations imposed by his nature, which are, perhaps, not less important and solemn. It is true that the problem of education has been made by the extreme complexity of human nature very difficult for us all, but we have got no warrant to simplify it by the short and easy method of looking upon a part as the whole. A man by doing so declares practically his belief that there has been a great redundance and waste displayed in the making of him; that much of what is richest and noblest in his nature ought to have been rejected as superfluous in the

practical conduct of life. *That*, to say the least we can of it, is very audacious. There is little doubt, one would think, that if God did not desire any class of men to do more than obey, for instance, the physical conditions by which health and wealth are to be obtained, that He would not have endowed them with powers and capacities fitted for so much nobler things. What is true of physical conditions is true of every other class of conditions:—æsthetic, intellectual, moral, and religious. Man's nature is not made to be exhausted in bodily exercises; *nor* in the contemplation and production of the beautiful; *nor* in discernment and love of truth and acquisition of knowledge; *nor* in performing our duties to our fellow-creatures; *nor* in entertaining devotional feelings, and giving them outward expression in worship;—not in any one of these, but in them all. Should the mind, in any instance, happen to be what we call *exhausted* in one direction, the idea of a great waste of faculty in our creation presses itself irresistibly upon us. It does so to the greatest extent when the man is engrossed by the lower classes of wants, but any exclusive special direction of the life will excite it. A mere artist is higher than a mere mechanic; in his case there is not so great a degradation of the man, still there certainly is a degradation. The divine idea is not only far better and higher than the actual result —this it always must be—but it is something essentially and specifically different, which it ought never to be. In fact, if exclusive development of the nature in conformity with a lower class of relations gives us most impressively the idea of waste, its exclusive development in conformity with the higher classes of relations gives us the most vivid, a painfully vivid, idea of disorder and disproportion. The man whose æsthetic perceptions are acute and clear, and whose emotional nature is tremblingly alive to all forms of grace and beauty, while he seems perfectly incapable of

coming to a sensible conclusion on any matter of business, or of understanding even the simplest dogmas of political or moral science or of religion, may awaken in us love and admiration towards him, but will certainly excite, at the same time, both pain and pity. The danger of exaggerated and exclusive development of one power or gift is made very strikingly manifest not only in the case of individuals, but equally on the wide field of universal history. . . .

"There is no more important problem in the philosophy of history than 'the decline and fall of Empires.' They seem to have, like individuals, their birth, youth, maturity, old age, and death—all assigned them in a necessary cycle. Gervinus and other speculators look upon this as a law. Here, however, they are obviously mistaken. The phenomena are, no doubt, what they point out; but a mere generalisation is not a law. A law is an expression of the relation of some causal sequence, and entirely different from a formula which merely embodies in general language a number of historic resemblances. There are definite relations in regard to the colour of the plumage of certain species of birds subsisting between the male and female, the young and the adult, which can be pointed out as so many general facts; but these facts, or rather these relations, are not laws, although the explanation of them might happen to be so—namely, in the improbable case of a single cause only being discovered, and that cause co-extensive only with themselves. Although, however, the explanation might not give a law, it could only be given through laws; for explanations always presuppose causal relations. Gervinus has evidently taken a generalisation for a law. It is true that what he points out has taken place in all history; but we can discover no absolute necessity for its having taken place. The necessity is asserted and called a law; whereas the law should have been evolved from an explanation of the necessity. Perhaps the characteristics of

the facts may be accounted for in this way: Every nation in its infancy has a certain character stamped upon it by the circumstances, physical and historical, in which it is placed; Rome, for instance, by its struggles with the Italian States which surround it; Egypt, by the fertile valley of the Nile in which her inhabitants were located. These characters will correspond to the nature of what we might call early national education, — to the agencies that act upon a people out of the past (the historical), or that press upon it from without, or from the bosom of the earth in virtue of its geographical situation. Reason would lead us to expect, and experience shows, the characters so formed to be exceedingly one-sided and defective—impressed deeply with the stamp of materialism. There is some one of the lower objects of human desire that becomes in this way an end for a whole nation; so that the power of that nation is fairly measured by its capability of producing a certain material result. The strength and power of Rome, for instance, might have been fairly estimated by the extent of the sweep of its sword; that of Egypt, on the other hand, by the extent of its *granaries*. These would give a correct estimate of their respective characters. It is the nature, however, of every isolated object of desire, that there comes a moment when it has no farther sphere of exercise, and consequently no farther power to elevate. Rome gains the world—all of it, at least, that is worth having—and Egypt grows as much as her soil will yield. There is nothing more to do; no more battles to fight, no more fields to break up with the ploughshare. All difficulties which required a struggle, which resisted the nation's realisation of its aim, have been overcome and crushed under foot. Farther advance is impossible in the direction in which the nation has moved for centuries under the impulse of tendencies and forces old as itself and inseparably interwoven with the whole life of its people, with

its laws and institutions. In these circumstances we may imagine for a community three, and only three, futures. That nation must (*a*) remain stationary at the point it has reached, or (*b*) alter completely the aim of its whole previous existence, and set out in some quite different direction, or (*c*) retrograde. But it is easy to show that the two former suppositions are moral impossibilities; that it is not in human nature to remain steadily in a position which it has taken it centuries of exertion to reach, without a step either upwards or downwards; and that it would be still more unnatural for a whole nation to regenerate itself on a sudden, and cast off entirely the character with which it set out on its historical career, and which that whole career has strengthened and confirmed. The only supposition remaining is the third, and, morally speaking, it is the only possible one. Thus the most striking phenomenon in history receives a sufficient explanation. We have not here given the explanation; we have merely sketched out how it may be given. What must be done by the philosophiser on history is to supply a detailed, scientific proof, drawn from the common principles of human nature, that of the three careers imagined as open to a nation, when, in following out some single isolated aim, it has reached the highest position possible for it, two of them are in reality merely imaginary—suppositions impossible for any nation to realise.

"It is not, however, as a philosophiser on history that I have at present to do with it, but as an essayist attempting to discover the relation of general to professional education. But even in this task the idea is of highest importance to us. It shows that the final degradation and ruin of all the great nations of the world have been owing to the excessive pursuit of some isolated and special good; to the domination over it of some exclusive tendency. And it is an immediate inference of common sense from this fact that the rapidity of degradation

will be accelerated by whatever gives intensity to the causal force, namely, its lowness as a motive and the degree of exclusiveness with which it operates. Whenever the aim of a nation is manifest and single, whenever it can be easily formulised, its ruin is inevitable, and will be more or less speedy just in proportion to the ease with which this can be done. Thus it is that we always find that when several classes of our race are mingled together and thoroughly combined and, as it were, interfused with each other, so as to form one nationality, that nationality will always be much greater, and play a more conspicuous part in history, than a nationality formed exclusively of any one of the elements or classes, even though the highest and most hopeful; the commingling of blood, thoughts, feelings, and tendencies, producing a new, a more complex and manifold national life. An instance will make this obvious. When we compare with the histories of the Western nations of Europe the history of Poland, the first thing that strikes the observer is its singular simplicity and unity. Nothing can be more regular and easily understood than its whole development. We have but to imagine an Asiatic people, originally nomadic, emigrating from Northern Asia, and forced by the very circumstances of its emigration into a warlike posture, which successive invasions compelled it to preserve, to find a natural explanation of all the fundamental traits of character which its whole existence as a nation manifested, and into which its laws, institutions, manners, and actions, may be resolved. The history of England is, perhaps, at the farthest extreme from this simplicity. Briton, Roman, Saxon, Scandinavian, and Norman, have all contributed in different degrees to the English character and destiny. The most thorough knowledge of the history of any one of these elements will not enable us to understand the result of the whole. Each people contributed something to the institutions, the civil polity, government, and customs

of England—to the political and social, the moral and religious, character of the different classes of her population; and it is only since the Norman conquest, when they had all become in a considerable measure blended and fused into one, that it is possible dimly to anticipate what the destiny of England is to be, and we are compelled to thank God that, bloody and dark as was our early history, it was no otherwise than what facts show it to have been. You may trace through, perhaps, more than two hundred years one predominant class of feelings and opinions; but you cannot tell whether they will be permanent or not, nor whether, let their influence be what they may during the period studied, they will eventually be for good or for evil, because the people regulated by these principles will be overlaid and mingled with another people, and you know not what relative place they will have in the character and institutions which arise from the union and interpenetration of the flesh and blood, the thoughts and feelings, of the two. It would be easy to show that the greatness and glory of England have arisen very much from the multiplicity of its constitutive elements, and that the weakness and degradation of Poland flowed very naturally out of a unity and simplicity pleasing only to the shallow philosophico-historian. The greater the number of elements which enter into national character the better, because the resultant character will almost of necessity be so much the more rich and manifold. The greater the number of elements also which enter into the civilisation of any country, so much the more certain is that civilisation to be permanent. Thus the civilisation of the modern world rests on a far surer basis than that of the ancient.

"It would appear, then, that one-sidedness is shown most explicitly by all history to be full of danger. If a nation become materialistic—too eager in its pursuit of gain and commercial success—a great philosopher or great religious

teacher ought to be looked upon as the most precious gift of God to that nation, since they will combat and counteract its self-destructive tendencies. They will receive little reward or recompense of men for their service; the more they are needed, the less will they be esteemed; the hotter, the more feverish the excitement of the race after wealth, the less agreeable to the maddened minds of the runners will be the calm voice of serene philosophy or true religion. But the duty of all honest men in such circumstances is plain; it is not to speak a single harsh or contemptuous word of those loftier inquiries into philosophy and religion which are painful to the feelings of his contemporaries only because these feelings are diseased, but, on the contrary, to raise his voice in protest against the false, the exaggerated, the destructive materialistic tendencies of his time, and on behalf of higher and more solemn realities. So, in like manner, should it happen—which, however, is not likely—that a nation should give itself up too exclusively to speculative habits, the proper remedy would be found only in an awakened interest in the concrete, the physical, the useful, the historical. The thing to be avoided is one-sidedness, exclusiveness, and the nature of the evil determines, of course, the nature of the remedy. But this one-sidedness, this exclusiveness, is simply *professionalism* apart from what constitutes a general development of humanity in all its leading principles. In working against this, then, through the diffusion of an education which has a wider aim than to develop humanity in but one of its phases, we may, without presumption, say that we are fellow-workers with God. We have correctly apprehended some part of the Divine plan in history, and we have conformed ourselves to what we have known. It is well to mark exactly how much has been left for us to do. The Supreme Being has kept a great deal beyond our power. His is the creation of souls—His is the appointment of the times and the seasons,

when great men shall arise to cause, by the peculiar conformation of their genius, history to move onwards in the path proscribed by His wise and righteous will, and to preserve the human race from self-destruction. In His hand, too, are the agencies which spring from past civilisations, and the agencies which issue from the bosom of Nature, from earth, and rippling sea, and starry heaven; and each one of them is employed by Him in providence to awaken the spirit of man to a sense of its own greatness, to make it genial, free, and manifold, and to counteract the effects of narrow and exclusive professional training. Through all these influences, addressing themselves to reason and conscience, love, wonder, admiration, and fear, our 'general education' is incessantly carried on. It is not designed, however, that they should develop man in spite of himself. He must co-operate in the formation of his own character. He must learn to recognise the tendency of the Divine agencies which act upon him, and then strive to submit himself to their deepest impressions, to seize and treasure up their highest teachings. They act upon us even when we are unconscious of their power and agency. But they do so feebly in comparison with what they do upon an intelligence awake, and a ripely cultivated nature. There is a certain art of submission to them which none but the initiated know. This art can be taught only by an unprofessional education in youth, through which the range of our sympathies and interests shall be sufficiently enlarged. If men are allowed to grow up with any part of their nature unawakened, whatever influences intrinsically adapted to develop that part of their nature may be in contact with their souls, they will remain inoperative. The human being will through life be to that extent an incomplete being."

NOTE B.

" Wer etwas Treffliches listen will,
Hätt' gern was Grostres geboren,
Der sammle still und unerschlafft
Im kleinster Puncte die höchste Kraft."—*Schiller.*

["Ah! he who would achieve the fair,
Or sow the embryo of the great,
Must hoard—to wait the ripening hour
In the least point the loftiest power."]

The only reply which I can conceive to be given to what is stated in the text is one suggested by the late M. Willm, the learned and able author of the 'Histoire de la Philosophie Allemande, depuis Kent jusqu'à Hegel,' and an educationalist of distinguished merit. It is, that a theory of education ought to have no reference to special dispositions of human nature or special aims; that it ought to determine the elements and characteristics of a discipline which might be common to men of all classes and professions, not as *inclusive* but as *exclusive* of all class and professional distinctions. This view is utterly untenable, speculatively absurd, practically injurious. It is speculatively absurd. A conception is general only on condition of comprehending particulars—of excluding none, of including all. It is practically injurious. It renders all special aims illegitimate, whereas a truly general principle should be also a truly supreme directing principle, with authority to govern and power to guide us in every relation of life.

In regard to the connection between general and professional education, I would just observe that the essential, universal relations between them are three, yielding these three formulæ:—

(*a.*) The relation between General and Professional Education is not simply psychical but also ethical.

(*b.*) It is not analytic but synthetic.

(*c.*) It is not statical but dynamical.

Each of these formulæ is capable of numerous and valuable applications. There can be no science of education until they are adequately understood and accepted. Hitherto there has been no clear recognition of any one of them.

Note C.

It is impossible to conceive a more solemn statement of this obligation than that of the Bishop of Oxford. I quote his words, with the prayer that God, of His grace, would cause every student for the ministry who reads them to weigh them well, and to make honest self-application of them.

"I must ask you, whether you 'trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost,' or 'truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 'to take upon you this office,' and you must answer as before your all-seeing Judge, 'I trust'—'I think so.'

"My brethren, this question is an awful one to put, an awful one to answer. Your reply must be spoken deliberately; with the full foreknowledge that it must be rendered; with every opportunity for self-examination; after solemn prayer; in the presence of the Church; before the jealous God who smote of old with sudden death him who stretched out his uncommissioned hand to stay but the material ark; before the Heart-searcher, whose invisible stroke swept instantly away those who 'lied not unto man, but unto God.'

"For yourselves, and for others, it is of the greatest moment that you answer not this question carelessly or wrongly: for others, for who can fix limits or ends to the disastrous issue, to souls for which Christ died, and to the whole Church, of the commencement of a faithless, indolent, unfruitful ministry? for yourselves, for the error is, by all human means, one which cannot be repaired. Your words cannot be unsaid; your vows cannot be read backward. Your ministerial char-

acter is indelible; the only reparation of which the case admits is, that you hereafter rise up to the requirements of the office you have so unhappily assumed. And, though the might of God's grace has wrought these conversions, yet who may venture to speculate upon being the subject of such undeserved mercy? Who will stake knowingly, on such a hazard, his own or his brethren's salvation? And, after all, such cases are not the rule, but the exception. As the rule, the ministry continues in its leading character as it commences. There is, of course, a growth in every living ministry; a growth from the weak uncertainty of infancy to the confirmed strength of perfect manhood; a growth in knowledge, comprehension, power, skill, insight, faith, and love; but, whilst there is growth on all sides in a living ministry, growth is not in the dead. The increase of corruption is there the only change. This is, indeed, the enemy's sad mockery of growth; the development within each false ambassador of Christ of the character of Antichrist; the full ripening and perfecting of selfishness, in one of its various forms of covetousness, or lust, or worldliness, or utter sloth and carelessness; the contracting and the hardening of the soul; the dulling of all conscience, till it sleeps, to awake only as the worm which dieth not.

"This, I say, is the ordinary law and rule of an unfaithful ministry. Instead of the man being made better, as the tempter whispers to you he will be, he is made worse, by his careless rushing into the Christian ministry. With them come new temptations and new requirements—new risks, that is, on both sides—and he has grace for neither, and so he falls, and falls lower than other men; falls, as he, perhaps, never would have fallen as a layman; falls, certainly, into deeper gulfs of sin and woe than he could otherwise have reached. God's word, with which he must have some familiarity, like daily-handled fire, hardens utterly his soul; God's

message spoken, but not listened to, makes deaf his ear; the visions of judgment and of peace, on which he has gazed unfeelingly, have turned his sense of sight to blindness. And even if he reach not this depth of woe, there are many lesser woes for him who has entered with thoughtlessness into this great charge. All—even the most thoughtful and prepared—find, it may be, as they go on, that they knew not whither they should be led when first they began to follow Christ: His net caught them, and they were taken; His voice allured them, and they followed Him; but they knew not at first how verily they should be made like Him, made to drink of His cup, and to be baptised with His baptism; and to this He leads them step by step; for this His grace enables them. But who can paint the bitter anguish through which they must pass, who, without a full trust in Him, and wellnigh without His presence, are met by these temptations and overtaken in this storm? It is most commonly with a heart almost broken that such men pass to life; it is by fire that they are saved. Surely, then, this is an awful answer for any of us to pronounce; and one concerning which it becomes us to search with all diligence, whether we can make it with anything of Christian confidence and truth." *

NOTE D.

Selfishness and pride lead to another very sinful violation of the principle asserted in this part of our discourse. There are persons who firmly believe that of all men religious instructors are the most influential and useful, and that it is the bounden duty of each Christian community to try to obtain the very ablest men—provided always that they have the in-

* A Charge, delivered to the Candidates for Ordination: and a Sermon, preached at the General Ordination in the Cathedral Church of Christ, Oxford, December 21, 1845. By Samuel, Lord Bishop of Oxford. London: Rivingtons, 1846.

dispensable moral and religious qualifications, a regenerated heart, a spiritually enlightened mind, and a firm determination to make the cause and kingdom of God in Christ triumphant on the earth—to become their overseers in spiritual things, yet would feel it a degradation to have any son of theirs in the Church, and, in consequence, send youths into the army and navy whose own inclination prompts them to become preachers of righteousness. This cannot be too severely condemned. It is a great crime, and yet common even in a Church where the temptation to it is less than in ours. I am happy to be able to quote the following words from a Bampton Lecture: "It was forbidden by the Mosaic law, that any man with a blemish should serve at the altar of that worldly sanctuary; and the ministry of the Christian Church is not confined to a single tribe, but is open to all, not that the basest should be devoted to the immediate Divine service, but that there should be presented thereunto the noblest and most excellent. What shall we say, then, of that parent who, for temporal views, for the sake of securing an inheritance, of opening an honourable and safe path to one of his children, offers to God, not the noblest, the most unblemished, of those which have been given to him, but the feeblest, the meanest, and the weakest? who devotes one, of whose capacities to do active good in his generation he has no conviction, and whose character he knows not to be higher than that of his fellows, but lower? He thus does all in his power to paralyse the vital energies of his Church; and, moreover, entangles his own son in vows, of which it is doubtful whether it will be for the welfare of his soul that he should ever discover the full force and meaning." *

* The Communion of Saints. By H. B. Wilson, B.D.

NOTE E.

It is erroneous to compare Nature with Theology, or Science with Revelation, since these are not correlative things, the true correlatives being Nature and Revelation, Science and Theology. It is almost incredible how numerous are the sophistries which are mere violations of this very obvious truth. In the discourse itself I have pointed out one which underlies all the self-defensive reasoning of the ultra-Conservative School of theologians, and which causes them, while professing reverence for the wisdom of the past, to ignore the whole history and teaching of the past, since these, if they have any meaning at all, show us that, although the great truths of Revelation have been light and life to men in all generations alike, the systems of theology founded on Revelation have been modified incessantly by every agency which powerfully influences man's nature. This error, which has been most disastrous in its influences, can only be counteracted by the awakening of a philosophic interest in the study of the History of Christian Dogmas. Similarly fallacious *cross* comparisons pervade the whole religious speculations of the representatives of the opposite extreme of theological opinion. There can be no scientific method for theology, and there can be no satisfactory determination of the relations between Natural and Revealed Religion, until we consent to treat Revelation as co-ordinate with Nature, and Theology as co-ordinate with Science.

NOTE F.

The study of method is entirely distinct from that of logic, and both educationally and practically of far higher value. It is most necessary, therefore, to call attention to the fact that the revolution in logical science, produced by the labours of Sir William Hamilton, threatens to exclude from

university teaching every reference to method. It has made the professorship of logic virtually a new one wherever it has obtained acceptance. The change, however, like most improvements, has its accompanying dangers. The old-fashioned system of logic, bearing the deep impression of the practical genius of Descartes, at least sought to direct and guide the intellect in its search for truth; and it must be admitted, that although its rules were rather commonplace they were useful, and cannot be safely neglected unless a substitute be obtained for them. The natural and only adequate substitute is to be found in the teaching of scientific method. If it were even taught in its application to the physical sciences, where the teacher could avail himself of the labours of Comte and Mill, of Herschel and Whewell, we might be confident that that would eventually lead to the establishment of a scientific doctrine of method for the theological sciences, where, unfortunately, there are no conscientious labours to start from. Such a doctrine is one of the great wants of our age.

Note G.

The duties referred to are as manifest as they are important, but there are none which the student is more in danger of forgetting, none which he would require to be more repeatedly reminded of. He ought to keep beside him, and have constant recourse to, some pious book calculated to serve as a faithful religious monitor. Archbishop Leighton's 'Exhortations to Students' are fragrant with the sweet savour of a most pure and fervent piety. It is told of him that, when minister of the parish of Newbattle, he was censured at a meeting of Synod for not "preaching to the times," and told that all the rest of his brethren did so. "Then if all of you," rejoined Leighton, "preach to the times, you will surely suffer one poor brother to preach only

about eternity." And more than any human compositions, perhaps, his 'Exhortations' are pervaded by the feeling that the wisdom of this world is darkness and its glory vanity, and that the interests of eternity are alone worthy of being pursued with the whole heart and strength. They are very short; but a man must be in an exceedingly hard and dead state of feeling indeed, when he can read any one of them without receiving from it a deep impression that all his getting of knowledge will profit him but little if he do not also get along with it "wisdom from above." These 'Exhortations,' however, being exclusively general—containing no special directions whatsoever — will not in any way supersede the necessity for making frequent use of the 'Reformed Pastor,' and the 'Directions to Students' of Richard Baxter; or the 'Pastoral Cautions' of Abraham Booth; or the 'Resolutions' of President Edwards. On one point insisted upon in my sermon — viz., the necessity of cherishing, in the midst of active intellectual exertions, a practical sympathy with the indigent and suffering—I rejoice to be able to quote the following precious words of Dr Arnold: "I cannot imagine hardly anything more useful to a young man of an active and powerful mind, advancing rapidly in knowledge, and with high distinction, either actually obtained or close in prospect, than to take him, or much better, that he should go of himself, to the abodes of poverty and sickness and old age. Everything there is a lesson; in everything Christ speaks, and the Spirit of Christ is ready to convey to his heart all that he witnesses. Accustomed to the comforts of life, and hardly ever thinking what it would be to want them, he sees poverty and all its evils—scanty room, and, too often, scanty fuel, scanty clothing, and scanty food. Instead of the quiet and neatness of his own chamber, he finds very often a noise and a confusion which would render deep thought impossible; instead of the stores of

knowledge with which his own study is filled, he finds, perhaps, only a Prayer-book and a Bible. Then let him see —and it is no fancied picture, for he will see it often if he looks for it—how Christ is to them who serve Him, wisdom at once, and sanctification, and blessing. He will find amidst all this poverty, in those narrow, close, and crowded rooms, amidst noise and disorder, and sometimes want of cleanliness also; he will see old age, and sickness, and labour, borne, not only with patience, but with thankfulness, through the aid of that Bible, and the grace of the Holy Spirit who is its Author — he will find that while his language and studies would be utterly unintelligible to the ears of those whom he is visiting, yet that they, in their turn, have a language and feelings to which he is no less a stranger. And he may think, too—and if he does, he may ever bless the hour that took him there—that, in fifty years or less, his studies and all concerned with them will have perished for ever; whilst their language and their feelings, only perfected in the putting off their mortal bodies, will be those of all-glorified and all-wise spirits in the presence of God and Christ."

THE END.

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